

## Suggested Guidelines for Developing a Class Syllabus/Outline: A Best Practices Document

*The purpose of this document is to share with all faculty an inventory of ideas that constitute “best practices” for developing a class syllabus or outline. It is intended to serve as a reference guide for information faculty may wish to include in the materials they distribute to students on the first day of the semester. This document is separate from the official course syllabus approved by departments and colleges. As a “best practices” document, it is designed to enhance teaching, learning, and communication between the instructor and the students.*

### **Preamble**

*This section includes specific information about the class and contact information about the instructor.*

- Class number and class title
  - For example, UI 111-11: The Title Of The Class
- When it meets
  - Days and time, including information about labs, etc.
- Where it meets
  - Location of classes, labs, recitations, performances, etc.
- Credit Hours
- Instructor’s name
- Office location
- Office phone number
- Email address
- Office hours
- Unique, identifying characteristics of the class
  - For example, if it is an ITV-, Online-, or Hybrid class

### *Additional Suggestions:*

*If there is a website for the class, if an online grade book will be available, or if there is a forum dedicated to the class, then information –including hyperlinks to those sites—should be included.*

### **Class Description**

*This section includes a statement from the instructor to the students about the purpose, objectives, and nature of the class, in narrative form. It elaborates on the official course description and includes information that distinguishes it from other sections being offered. It describes, in as much detail as possible, what the class is about, and should include an articulation of:*

- Class objectives
- Prerequisites
- Readings and related resources
  - The instructor should identify what is required for the class, where it is located, and how it may be accessed.

### **Expectations and policies**

*This section includes specific information about the rules of the class. It identifies the policies the instructor has a right and responsibility to administer and indicates the expectations of the students associated with them. This section includes official statements about:*

- Attendance
  - While attendance per se cannot be required of students, there are consequences associated with absences and policies governing excused- and non-excused absences. The official statement about attendance, derived from the Undergraduate Bulletin, may be accessed at: <http://www.semo.edu/bulletin/pdf/2008Bulletin.pdf>, page 17
  - Specific information about the relationship between attendance and participation, assignments, and exams in the class for which the syllabus is created should be included

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in this section. For example, faculty-specific policies regarding make-up exams, point deductions for late work, et cetera, should be articulated.

- Academic honesty
  - The Undergraduate Bulletin defines academic dishonesty as “...those acts which would deceive, cheat, or defraud so as to promote one’s scholastic record...”, and states that “[v]iolations of academic honesty represent a serious breach of discipline and may be considered grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the university”.
  - Faculty are encouraged to include a statement to this effect, noting that students are expected to understand and abide by such rules.
    - The official statement about academic honesty, including plagiarism, may be accessed at: <http://www.semo.edu/bulletin/pdf/2008Bulletin.pdf>, pp. 18-21.
    - Additional information may be accessed at: <http://www6.semo.edu/stuconduct/>
  - Faculty are also encouraged to provide any additional information they may deem useful to curtail the likelihood of dishonesty.
- Civility and Harassment
  - A major determinant of a successful educational experience is a shared sense of respect among and between the students and their instructor.
  - Faculty should include a statement about creating and maintaining a climate of mutual respect, as well as a specific statement about harassment.
    - Practical examples of civility –of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable conduct—should be included in the syllabus.
  - Judicial Affairs is responsible for addressing such matters and that information is available at: <http://www6.semo.edu/stuconduct/>
- Disabilities
  - Southeast Missouri State University and Disability Support Services remain committed to making every reasonable educational accommodation for students with disabilities. Many services and accommodations which aid a student’s educational experience are available for students with various types of disabilities. It is the student’s responsibility to contact Disability Support Services to become registered as a student with a disability in order to have accommodations implemented. Accommodations are implemented on a case by case basis. For more information visit the following site: [www.semo.edu/lapdss](http://www.semo.edu/lapdss) or contact Disability Support Services at 573-651-2273.
- Technology
  - Students should be informed of any expectations, requirements, and policies relating to the use of technology in the class and for assignments, exams, and participation.
    - For example, if a professor is using DropBox for assignment submission or an online grade book for a given class, then specific instructions about access and usage should be provided.
- The Center for Writing Excellence
  - A common objective across the curriculum is the students’ ability to write effectively. Faculty may wish to include a link to the Center for Writing Excellence, located at <http://ustudies.semo.edu/writing>

*Additional Suggestions:*

- *Make clear the consequences of missing assignments, exams, and participation opportunities when discussing attendance.*
- *Provide specific information about academic honesty and plagiarism, as well as practical examples.*
- *With regard to technology, provide specific information/rules regarding the use of cell phones, portable technology, and recording devices.*

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- *If there are assumed risks associated with the class, or safety issues in general, note them in this section of the syllabus.*
- *Make clear the expectations of student work on assignments. Quantitative and qualitative information should be included, as should be information preferred or required submission formats, writing styles, performance measurements, etc.*
- *Make clear the expectations of the instructor regarding rules of communication (e.g., requiring the use of the SE Key for email correspondences), grading, time-on-task (e.g., what constitutes a timely fashion for feedback), and accessibility.*
- *With regard to writing assistance, faculty may wish to include a direct link to the Center for Writing Excellence's Online Writing Lab (OWL), located at: <http://ustudies.semo.edu/writing/owl.asp>.*

### **Class Outline**

*This section includes information on specific assignments, due-dates, topic coverage, and related class activities. The instructor should be as thorough and precise as possible in the delineation of class time and work.*

- Topics
- Assignments and Projects
- Quizzes and Exams
- Assigned readings and, if appropriate, their location
- Corresponding Dates
- Deadlines

### **Additional Suggestions:**

- *If assignment details and due-dates may be subject to change, consider informing the students of this and instructing them on how they should check for periodic updates.*
- *Be as precise as possible with assignment expectations, policies, and deadlines.*
- *If there are penalties for late work, make sure the due-dates are absolutely clear.*

### **Grading**

*This section includes information about the calculation of grades. As with the Class Outline, the instructor is encouraged to be as thorough and precise as possible in explaining how student work will be assessed and how grades will be awarded.*

- Grading scale and grading policies
  - Include information on how grades are calculated.
    - How, for example, do numerical grades translate into letter grades?
  - Once provided to the students, the grading scale is not subject to change
- Percentage point allocation relative to assignment type
- Grading/scoring rubric information

### **Additional Suggestions:**

- *Policies regarding curving, extra credit, dropping lowest scores, etc., should be noted in this section.*
- *University policies regarding incompletes and other grade-specific policies may be included at the discretion of the instructor*
- *If a grading or scoring rubric is used for any or all assignments in a class, consider making them available to the students.*