**The Student-Centered Syllabus:**

**A General Guide and Template**

(Adapted from materials at other UC Campuses)

**General Description/Purpose**

This document is designed to assist you in creating a *student-centered syllabus* that sets a positive tone for the course, generates student interest, and communicates your goals and expectations for the semester. We recognize there are many ways to create a syllabus, so we have made several suggestions regarding the more typical and/or necessary sections to include on your syllabus. The template we have provided may be used *as is* or modified to serve your needs.

It is critical to understand that, while the content and course learning outcomes identified on your Senate-Approved syllabus remain the same, the student-centered syllabus takes on a slightly different formfrom the official document. The most important difference is that

a *student-centered* *syllabus* is *written with your students in mind*. We offer the following suggestions.

1. **Use student-friendly language:** This document is meant to introduce students to the course and expectations, avoid using educational jargon. You may want to rephrase learning outcomes or other aspects of the syllabus into language students will understand.
2. **Chunk information** into manageable, well-labeled sections. The amount of information students need from a syllabus can be overwhelming in any one document. So, consider the overall organization of information: use labels that make sense to the student and integrate images, boxes, tables, etc. to help highlight each section.
3. **Create a** "**Module Zero"** in Catcourses to organize all materials created to introduce students to the instructional staff and the course (e.g., introductory video and syllabus).

Remember: Pedagogical coaches and instructional designers in the **Teaching Commons** are available to help you throughout this process and/or to simply give feedback along the way.

(insert link to the consultation page)

**Syllabus Template**

**[Course Code]: [Course Name] [Sem/YR]**

**Instructor/Course Introduction**

*This is the place to build excitement and interest by sharing what the course is all about, why you are passionate about the subject, and how the content of the course is valuable in a student's life and future career. Doing so may help increase student engagement and persistence in the discipline. Some instructors choose to open with a course-relevant quote or image to help set the tone for the course/semester.*

*\*\*Research suggests that students often choose their degree program based on the enthusiasm of an inspiring instructor (Kuh, 2009). Consider creating an introductory video to accompany this syllabus.*

Class Location:

Class Format (in-person, hybrid, online):

Days and Times (A/Synchronous Meetings):

Course Prerequisites:

**Instructor Information**

*Include the name(s), office locations, and contact information for each member of the instructional staff. Keep in mind that it is helpful for students to have varied ways to contact you. If you have a course or personal website, please provide this information here.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Instructional Staff** | **Office Location** | **Contact Information (Email)** |
| Instructor: |  |  |
| Graduate TA(s): |  |  |
| Learning Assistant(s): |  |  |

**Office Hours**

*Include the location and time of office hours. Think about times that will be mutually convenient for both* you and your students*. Explain the purpose of office hours and reinforce this during the first class. One way to increase availability is to integrate virtual office hours via Zoom. You might also want to consider requiring every student (or small groups) to attend one scheduled office hours session (e.g., 10-15 min). This can help alleviate the uncertainty or nervousness often felt by students new to the university and build community relationships. If you do this, make sure to explain the purpose and that the appointment is "required" - during the first class.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Days and Times** | **Location** |
| In-Person Office Hours |  |  |
| Virtual Office Hours |  | (Zoom link) |

**My View of Teaching and Learning (optional)**

*This is a space to share your implicit beliefs about your role as an instructor; effective teaching and learning; the role of the student/learning community; and expectations you have for the students and learning community.*

*For example:*

* *Although I am the content expert in this class, I believe my role is to serve as a facilitator of student learning rather than transmitter(lecturer) of disciplinary content.* (Notice the difference is the focus on student learning not content delivery).
* *As a student, you can expect me (the instructor) to utilize a variety of research-based educational approaches and strategies aimed at your success.*
* *Effective learning requires consistent student engagement with the content and course materials. That means, you are expected to participate in active learning experiences and interact with the course content.*

**Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement / Community Norms**

*Express a commitment to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identities. This statement is meant to establish guidelines that will encourage your students to participate in discussions and contribute to the field from their perspectives and/or worldviews. We aim to create a learning environment that supports learner-learner, learner-content, and learner-instructor interactions and in which students are free of fear, harassment, or ridicule.*

*For Example: Research reveals that a sense of belonging, personal value, and the ability to express one’s perspectives without the fear of being personally attacked or intimidated (i.e., brave or safe spaces) is critical to learning. As such, we need to have some agreed upon norms of behavior for both in-person/synchronous and remote/asynchronous communications. All students have a right to learn, and the instructor has a right to teach. Our agreements will help to maintain a productive learning environment that supports equity, diversity, and inclusion.*

1. *Be committed to UC Merced’s Principles of Community - “These principles reflect our ongoing efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures lifelong learning and growth for all of its members.”* [***UCM Principles of Community***](https://www.ucmerced.edu/principles-of-community)
2. *Help to establish and maintain a community whereby all members feel they belong and are valued. In every sense, diversity provides an opportunity for us to grow personally, intellectually, and professionally.*
3. *In all communications, exercise professionalism and cultural responsiveness.*
4. *Show respect for differing lived experiences, opinions, and world views. One of the purposes of higher education is to expand your mind and perspectives. Maintain a growth mindset.*
5. *Be responsible for your decisions, actions, and the impact these actions have on others. Click here for addition samples of inclusion statements and course expectations.*

**Program Learning Outcomes (Optional)**

*Program learning outcomes (PLOs) describe the skills-sets students will walk away with upon completion of the degree program. PLOs should be measurable and observable - giving specifics about what students will be able to do at the end of the program.*

*Upon completion of this course****, you will be able to****...*

*To learn/review how to write clear and observable course learning outcomes, refer to (insert a link to design materials)*

**Course Learning Outcomes**

*Course learning outcomes (CLOs) describe the skills-sets students will walk away with upon completion of your course. CLO should be measurable and observable - giving specifics about what students will be able to do at the end of the unit or course. These should be written in student-friendly language, using "you" instead of "students."*

*Upon completion of this course****, you will be able to****...*

**Required Materials and Tools**

*Include your course text(s) or link to open-source education resource materials. List any additional materials students should reference or purchase to be successful in your course (e.g., iclickers.*

**Grading Information and Criteria**

*Summary of Grading Activities and Weights (Example)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Assignment*** | ***Points*** | ***Weight in Class Total*** |
| *Participation Points x 15* |  | *%* |
| *Discussion Board x 5* |  | *%* |
| *Assignment 1* |  | *%* |
| *Assignment 2* |  | *%* |
| *Assignment 3* |  | *%* |
| *Exams x 3* |  | *%* |
| *Labs or other Exercises* | *ungraded* |  |
| *Quizzes/Self-Checks x 15* | *ungraded* |  |
|  | *\_\_\_\_\_ Points* | *100%* |

**Grading Scale**

**A =** 90-100% **B =** 80-89% C = 70-79% **D =** 60-69% **F/not Yet** = <60%

**Assignments/Active Learning**

*Give your students a brief overview on what they can expect in terms of the type of learning experiences/assignments. Will they be completed in-class or outside of class? Will/Can they work in groups? What are you expecting them to do to demonstrate to you that they are learning the material? If you are giving free-response assignments, it is a good idea set word limits and legibility. Consider including a reminder for students to download the pdf of the calendar of assignments and due dates.*

* + *Do your best work and meet deadlines. I understand that life does not always happen as expected, so if you have an unforeseen incident that prevents you from meeting a deadline, please email me at least 24 hours in advance of the due date to request an extension.*

**Discussion Board Activities**

*This is where you want to describe the purpose and value of using the online/asynchronous discussion board feature in Catcourses. If points are attached to student postings, then describe what is involved in participating in and contributing to an instructive conversation. (i.e., An instructional conversation deepens conceptual understandings, identifies areas of confusion or uncertainty, helps uncover and potentially correct misconceptions. These conversations benefit all involved. From our community agreements -- we are each individually responsible for our actions, words, and the intentional or unintentional impact they have on others in our community.*

* + *Seek understanding and growth rather than affirmation of your existing beliefs. Do your part to extend conversations rather than shut them down.*
  + *We support open dialogue and diversity of thought when we ask for clarity, more information, and considerations of alternative points of view.*
  + *Respectful and supportive responses begin with:*
    - * *Can you tell me more about?*
      * *Please clarify what you mean by.*
      * *Have you considered?*
      * *Is it also possible that?*

**Quizzes and Exams**

*This section usually draws a lot of attention, so be as specific as possible. Include information such as the number of exams, whether students are allowed to use notes (and how much), and scantron information. For large classes, you may want to mention here whether you would like your students to bring a recognizable photo ID to show you when they turn in their exams. You can also add some policies here, such as makeup exams or any avoidable penalties (arriving late, etc.). Instructors with a high level of concern regarding cheating may want to review with students the academic integrity policy (Link), and institute steps to minimize cheating (insert link: rethinking assessment).*

**Grading Procedure and Feedback**

*Use this space to describe how student learning will be monitored (e.g., formative, low-stakes quizzes) and evaluated (summative, higher-stakes projects or exams). Remind student to use the course calendar to monitor when assignments/ activities are due.*

*Define a) when students should expect to receive feedback on an assignment and b) the difference between targeted, instructive feedback and editing with a running commentary (strive for brief, instructive feedback). This clarification is also important when it comes to obtaining feedback on discussion board participation. Be clear that it is unreasonable for students in large enrollment classes to expect individual comments on original and subsequent posts; then, clarify how you will provide feedback to the group. You may want to clarify the form of evaluation and feedback and provide examples where appropriate (digital feedback, handwritten feedback).*

***Attendance/Participation Points***

*Share your policy on attendance and class participation. This is a good place to note that absences for religious belief, observance, or practice will be accommodated as much as possible given reasonable notification of the need for an accommodation.*

* + *Show up to class “prepared” to learn.*
  + *Support the learning of others (which also means do not interfere with or disrupt the learning of others).*

***Late or Missing Assignments***

*Describe your policy for late or missing assignments, how to notify you, if (and how many) points are deducted, deadlines, etc. here.*

***Extra Credit***

*Describe your policy for extra credit, how to earn extra credit, and the value of each extra credit activity here. Remove if not applicable.*

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism** (*Suggested Language)*

Academic honesty is taken very seriously at UC Merced. The [**Academic Honesty Policy**](https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/sites/osrr.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/academic_honesty_-_800.pdf) and the [**Code of Student Conduct**](https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/sites/osrr.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/code_of_conduct_600_and_700.pdf) emphasize that students, faculty and administration all share responsibility for maintaining a fair and honest academic environment. UC Merced is creating a strong tradition of upholding the student academic honesty policy and addressing suspected violations through the Report Form for Academic Misconduct and when appropriate the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR). Faculty and students both express confidence in the current process, which resolves almost all cases through informal meetings with students rather than formal hearings and emphasizes education in the discipline process. Faculty and OSRR strive to hold students accountable for violations but gives them the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

Plagiarism: Any time you use the research, ideas, images, analysis, language, etc. produced by another, you must cite that individual (give them credit). If you use the words of another author verbatim (word-for-word), you must indicate that by putting the words in quotation marks and noting the source.

As a student at UC Merced, you are expected to know when and how to cite and paraphrase correctly. If you do not, ask me or your TA for help. Submitting work that contains work "borrowed" from others and not properly cited is called "plagiarism" and is a violation of our Code of Academic Conduct.

**Student Accessibility** (*Requested Language from Student Accessibility Services)*

University of California, Merced is committed to creating learning environments that are accessible to all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on a disability, please feel welcome to contact me privately so we can discuss options. In addition, please contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at (209) 228-6996 or [**access@ucmerced.edu**](mailto:access@ucmerced.edu) as soon as possible to explore reasonable accommodations. All accommodations must have prior approval from Student Accessibility Services based on appropriate documentation.

If you anticipate or experience barriers due to pregnancy, temporary medical condition, or injury, please feel welcome to contact me so we can discuss options. You are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students for support and resources at (209) 228-3633 or[**https://studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/dean-students**](http://https:/studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/dean-students)

*The guidelines for student accommodations must be outlined here. Advise the students to contact SAS and make the appropriate arrangement themselves. It is advisable to include a deadline early in the semester (e.g., by end of week 3) for students to notify you of a need for accommodations.*

**Course Schedule**

Creating a table with course topics and aligned activities will help students navigate the course and reinforce how learning outcomes are assessed through multiple activities throughout the duration of the course.

**Week Topics Activities, Assessments, and Due Learning dates Outcome**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week/Module** | **Topic(s)** | **Activities, Assessments, and Due Dates** | **Learning Outcomes** |
| Week 1/ Module Zero: Intro. to Course |  | Reading:  Discussion Brd: Introduce yourself (due Friday of wk. 1)  Recorded Lecture 0.1  Assignment: Setting Personal Goals | 1.1 & 1.2 |
| Week 2/  Module Name |  |  |  |

**How to Succeed in this Course**

*Motivation and/or levels of engagement with the course materials (e.g., effort, time, etc.) is driven by a student's expectations to succeed and the* value s*/he places on the material (Kuh, 2009; Trowler, 2010). Utilize this area to give reinforce the value of this material and your course-specific tips for success/study strategies. Draw the students' attention to the tools you have added to the Catcourse to support their success in your course?*

**Resources for Support and Learning**

**Academic Student Support**

**Links to campus Tutoring and Writing centers, the library, PALS, supplemental instruction, technical services, etc.**

* [Math](https://mathcenter.ucmerced.edu/) and [Chem](https://chemcenter.ucmerced.edu/) Centers
* [University Writing Center](https://writingcenter.ucmerced.edu/)
* [Undergraduate Research Opportunity Center](https://uroc.ucmerced.edu/)
* [Bright Success Center: Learning Tools](https://learning.ucmerced.edu/learning-tools/resources)
* [Library Services](http://library.ucmerced.edu/research/instructors/library-instruction-services)

**Other Student Resources**

**Links regarding basic housing, food insecurity, health and counseling services, community centers.**

* [Student Affairs/Dean of Students](https://studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/dean-students)
* [University Health Services](https://health.ucmerced.edu/)
* [Bobcat Advising Center](https://bobcat-advising-center.ucmerced.edu/)
* [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.ucmerced.edu/)
* [Bobcat Food Pantry](https://sustainability.ucmerced.edu/initiatives/food/food-pantry)
* [Basic Needs Assistance](https://basicneeds.ucmerced.edu/)

**Additional Optional Information**

***Subject to Change Policy***

*Include a statement indicating that - only under special circumstances will the information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, be subject to change. If change is necessary, the instructor will provide you with reasonable advance notice and seek agreement of course members.*

***Technology Policy***

*Clarify when and under what circumstances it will be appropriate to use various devices in your course. Articulate if students should or should not have devices accessible for certain parts of your course/weekly sessions. Should the course assignments require students to be working asynchronously in Catcourses or even synchronously online with classmates, please indicate what devices they will need to do so.*

***Letter of Recommendation Requests***

*Share your guidelines and/or criteria for writing letters of recommendation. How much lead time do you require? What materials should students prepare for you before making such a request? This is also an opportunity to encourage students to engage in active class participation and demonstrate qualities that they would like included in a letter of recommendation.*