

Mindful and Learner-Centered Syllabus Checklist

Use the seven steps and checklist to determine whether your course syllabus includes these learner-centered components.

Seven Steps to a Learner-Centered Syllabus

Step 1. Evaluate your existing syllabus using this checklist to identify areas for improvement.

Step 2. Create a plan for implementation by identifying which syllabus element you would like to improve.

Step 3. Experiment with your syllabus. When your students ask questions or requests, make a note/memo on your syllabus. Then use these notes to continue to improve your syllabus.

Step 4. Assess the implementation of changing your syllabus. Conduct a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) project, publish your syllabus in outlets such as Project Syllabus by the Society of Teaching of Psychology (<http://teachpsych.org/otrp/syllabi/index.php>), or The Open Syllabus Project (<http://opensyllabusproject.org/>).

Step 5. Review guidelines, resources, and examples found on CELT's How to Create an Effective Syllabus webpage (<http://bit.ly/isusyllabus>). This checklist is updated periodically with the revision date listed on the back page.

Step 6. Repeat steps 1–5.

Step 7. Never stop repeating steps 1–5.

Overall Syllabus

- Use positive, welcoming, inviting, and inclusive language in your syllabus. Examples: “Late work is eligible for 60% of the original points,” or “Attendance will benefit you in several ways,” or “You have what it takes to succeed in this course without engaging in academic misconduct. Do not jeopardize the hard work you’ve put into this course.”
- Use tools to make your course accessible on CELT's Accessibility in Your Course page (<http://bit.ly/celest-accessify>).

Course Information

- Course Title, Course Abbreviation and Number
- Semester and Year (Start Date to End Date)
- Number of Credit Hours
- Course delivery mode (<https://bit.ly/isu-delivery>): meet (in-person in a physical learning space [classroom, lab, studio, etc.], hybrid, online (synchronously [occurs in real-time], or asynchronous [not at the same time]), etc.
- Time: Meets at class times (according to the ISU Schedule of Classes) and online work schedule determined by the instructor.
- Place: On-campus learning space (classroom, lab, studio, etc.)? On-campus learning space and online? Online only?

Instructor Information

If necessary, include similar teaching assistant(s) or co-teacher(s) information.

- Your name
- Physical office location (or if you will meet with students virtually)

- Student Hours (Consider using "Student Hours" instead of "Office Hours" to promote that these times are explicitly set aside for students in case they need help outside class). Provide student hours via multiple means of access (your office, phone, email, virtually using webcasting software). Example: Student Hours - T & R 8:30-9:30 a.m. in my office or via Webex. Individual assistance is always available by appointment. I look forward to seeing you during student hours.
- Telephone number or the best way to communicate with you (e.g., use Inbox in Canvas (<https://bit.ly/2Z5VmVD>) to record audio or video using the Rich Content Editor tool).
- Email address and other contact information

Departmental Information

- Name of department
- Preferred contact information for the department (e.g., physical location of the central office, main phone number)

Course Goals, Learning Outcomes, and Learning Objectives

- For a background and starting point on course design, use CELT's Basic Course Design page (<http://bit.ly/coursealignment>) along with the Online Course Essentials (ONCE) (<https://bit.ly/celt-once>).
- Share with students how the course fits into the overall curriculum and what they will leave the course being able to do. Answering the question, "Why is this course useful?" Also, orient students to the discipline if it's an introductory course.
- List 4-5 broad-based learning outcomes that reflect what students will learn and skills they will develop by completing the learning activities. Provide rationales for assignments, activities, methods, policies, and procedures tied to these learning outcomes. Visit CELT's Tips on Writing Course Goals/Learning Outcomes and Measurable Learning Objectives page (<http://bit.ly/coursegoals>) as a resource for developing your course.

Describe Course Materials, Delivery, Format, and Components

- Specify textbooks and readings by author and editions. When possible, explain connections to the course goals and how the text and readings address them.
- Explain expectations to have completed readings before class sessions and the degree of understanding that you expect (e.g., complete pop quizzes, discuss concepts, or apply reading information to problem-solving scenarios).
- Describe other course components such as course delivery (in-person, hybrid/blended, online), teaching approaches, group assignments, individualized consultation, etc.
- Share information from ISU's Library Instructor webpage (<http://bit.ly/isulibinstruct>) if readings are on course reserves.
- Identify where students can obtain additional equipment, resources, or materials.

Assignments (Papers, quizzes, exams, projects, etc.)

- Connect multiple means of assessment (exams, quizzes, exercises, projects, papers, etc.) directly to learning outcomes.
- Ensure that students can locate where they submit assignments (e.g., online via Canvas, in-person, etc.).
- Consider using the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) framework by providing these for each assignment:
 - Purpose: practice skills, expand content knowledge, and benefits for life-long learning.
 - Tasks: clarify steps on what to do and how to do it.
 - Criteria: provides guidelines on how to be successful (e.g., checklist, rubric), as well as examples and strategies for students to improve their work.

How will Students Be Evaluated?

- Explain the evaluation methods explicitly, and grades assigned. Include components of the final grade, weights assigned to each course element, grading on a curve or scale, etc.
- Use both summative and formative evaluations (e.g., oral presentations, group work, self-evaluation, peer evaluation), see CELT's Formative and Summative Assessment page (<https://bit.ly/celt-form-summ>)
- Employ periodic feedback mechanisms to monitor learning (e.g., graded and non-graded quizzes, tests, lecture-response systems, tests, reflection papers).
- Provide ways that students can easily calculate or find their grades at any point in the course.

Course Policies

State your policies clearly in the syllabus and discuss them throughout the semester regarding:

- Expectations for attendance, assignments, late assignments, make-up options, extra credit, and examinations.
- Steps to report illness via ISU's Thielen Student Health Center's Class Excuse webpage (<http://bit.ly/isu-class-excuse>).
- Cheating and plagiarism, learn more from ISU's Office of Student Conduct's webpage (<http://bit.ly/isu-academic-misconduct>) along with best practices on CELT's Achieving Academic Integrity page (<https://bit.ly/celt-integrity>).
- List grading policies regarding incomplete marks, visit the ISU Catalog website (<http://catalog.iastate.edu/>).
- Make clear a student's course obligations and your obligations to teaching the course.
- Share expected classroom behaviors (examples available in the checklist section "Examples of Inclusive, Professionalism and Mutual Respect Statements").

Course Calendar

- Use the Interfaith Calendar website (<http://www.interfaith-calendar.org/>) when scheduling projects, presentations, and exams to consider any potential conflicts.
- Provide a course calendar that outlines topics to be covered, reading requirements, assignment due dates, etc. If necessary, revise it and be sure students get an updated version.
- Note dates and times of any exams scheduled outside of class time. If needed, visit ISU's Online Testing Center website (<http://www.testcenter.iastate.edu/>).
- Include the date and time of the final exam and how/where it will take place. Locate the information on the Office of the Registrar's webpage (<https://www.registrar.iastate.edu/students/exams>).

Additional Learner-Centered Information

- Inform students about sensitive or potentially disturbing information or activities covered in the course.
- Consider adding a link in your Canvas course to ISU's Online Learner Support webpage (<https://bit.ly/learner-support>).
- Estimate student workload. Give students a sense of how much preparation and work the course requires. But be realistic; they don't believe either scare tactics or soft-pedaling. (Remember that yours isn't the only class they're taking.) One way to determine the workload is to use the Rice University Course Workload Estimator web tool (<http://cte.rice.edu/workload/>).
- Share expectations in your syllabus and discuss them throughout the semester. Include information on how to succeed:
 - Check your Iowa State email regularly.
 - Log into Canvas, the campus learning management system, daily.
 - Communicate with your instructor and visit during student hours.

- Create a study schedule so that you don't fall behind.
- Connect with tutors, academic coaches, communication consultants, resources, supplemental instructors, and more via ISU's Academic Success Center website (<http://www.asc.dso.iastate.edu/>), ISU's Writing and Media Center website (<https://www.wmc.dso.iastate.edu/>), and ISU's Student Accessibility Services (<http://www.sas.dso.iastate.edu>).

Iowa State University Syllabus Statements from Faculty Senate

Required

- Free Expression:** Iowa State University supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech (<https://bit.ly/isu-freedomspeech>) and the principle of academic freedom (<https://bit.ly/regents-academicfreedom>) in order to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech as long as student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and conveyed in an appropriate manner.

Recommended

- Accessibility Statement:** Iowa State University is committed to assuring that all educational activities are free from discrimination and harassment based on disability status. Students requesting accommodations for a documented disability are required to work directly with staff in Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to establish eligibility and learn about related processes before accommodations will be identified. After eligibility is established, SAS staff will create and issue a Notification Letter for each course listing approved reasonable accommodations. This document will be made available to the student and instructor either electronically or in hard-copy every semester. Students and instructors are encouraged to review contents of the Notification Letters as early in the semester as possible to identify a specific, timely plan to deliver/receive the indicated accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are not retroactive in nature and are not intended to be an unfair advantage. Additional information or assistance is available online at www.sas.dso.iastate.edu, by contacting SAS staff by email at accessibility@iastate.edu, or by calling 515-294-7220. Student Accessibility Services is a unit in the Dean of Students Office located at 1076 Student Services Building.
- COVID-19 health and safety requirements:** *The following new language developed in collaboration with the Academic Continuity Workgroup, Dean of Students Office, and Faculty Senate Executive Board, is to be included verbatim in the syllabus for any course you teach having an in-person (face-to-face) component. The health and safety syllabus language distributed previously has been revised to reflect the change in Iowa State University's face covering policy. The following language supersedes the template distributed in SVPP COVID-19 Communication #15 on July 22, 2020:*

COVID-19 health and safety requirements

Students are responsible for abiding by the university's COVID-19 health and safety expectations (<https://bit.ly/guidance-covid-19>). All students attending this class in-person are required to follow university [policy](#) regarding health, safety, and face coverings:

- wear a cloth face covering in all university classrooms, laboratories, studios, and other in-person instructional settings and learning spaces. Cloth face coverings are additionally required to be worn indoors in all university buildings, and outdoors when other people are or may be present where physical distancing of at least 6 feet from others is not possible. Students with a documented health or medical condition that prevents them from wearing a cloth face covering should consult with Student Accessibility Services (<https://sas.dso.iastate.edu/>) in the Dean of Students Office.
- ensure that the cloth face covering completely covers the nose and mouth and fits snugly against the side of the face.
- practice physical distancing to the extent possible.
- assist in maintaining a clean and sanitary environment.
- not attend class if you are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
- not attend class if you have been told to self-isolate or quarantine by a health official.
- follow the instructor's guidance with respect to these requirements. Failure to comply constitutes disruptive classroom conduct. Faculty and teaching assistants have the authority to deny a non-compliant student entry into a classroom, laboratory, studio, conference room, office, or other learning space.

These requirements extend outside of scheduled class time, including coursework in laboratories, studios, and other learning spaces, and to field trips. These requirements may be revised by the university at any time during the semester.

In accordance with university policy, instructors may use a face shield while they are teaching as long as they are able to maintain 8 feet of physical distance between themselves and students during the entire instructional period. Some form of face covering must be worn at all times in learning spaces regardless of the amount of physical distancing.

Faculty may refer matters of non-compliance to the Dean of Students Office for disciplinary action, which can include restrictions on access to, or use of, university facilities; removal from university housing; required transition to remote-only instruction; involuntary disenrollment from one or more in-person courses; and other such measures as necessary to promote the health and safety of campus.

It is important for students to recognize their responsibility in promoting the health and safety of the Iowa State University community, through actions both on- and off-campus. The university's faculty asks that you personally demonstrate a commitment to our Cyclones Care campaign (<https://www.care.iastate.edu/>). Iowa State University's faculty support the Cyclones Care campaign and ask you personally to demonstrate a commitment to our campaign. Your dedication and contribution to the campaign will also protect your family, classmates, and friends, as well as their friends and families. Our best opportunity for a successful fall semester with in-person learning and extramural activities requires all of us to collaborate and fully participate in the Cyclones Care campaign.

- Discrimination and Harassment:** Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. Veteran. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies may be directed to Office of Equal Opportunity, 3410 Beardshear Hall, 515 Morrill Road, Ames, Iowa 50011, Tel. 515-294-7612, Hotline 515-294-1222, email eooffice@iastate.edu.
- Religious Accommodations:** Iowa State University welcomes diversity of religious beliefs and practices, recognizing the contributions differing experiences and viewpoints can bring to the community. There may be times when an academic requirement conflicts with religious observances and practices. If that happens, students may request reasonable accommodation for religious practices. In all cases, you must put your request in writing. The instructor will review the situation in an effort to provide a reasonable accommodation when possible to do so without fundamentally altering a course. For students, you should first discuss the conflict and your requested accommodation with your professor at the earliest possible time. You or your instructor may also seek assistance from the Dean of Students Office, website (<http://dso.iastate.edu>) or via phone 515-294-1020 or the Office of Equal Opportunity, website (<https://www.eoc.iastate.edu>) or via phone 515-294-7612.
- Statement on Prep Week:** This class follows the Iowa State University Prep Week policy, as noted in the ISU Policy Library and section 10.6.4 of the Faculty Handbook. Visit the ISU Policy Library website (<http://www.policy.iastate.edu/>) for policy wording.
- Contact Information for Academic Issues:** If you are experiencing, or have experienced, a problem with any of the above issues, email academicissues@iastate.edu

Consider Including these Examples of Inclusive, Professionalism and Mutual Respect Statements

- Related to ISU's Principles of Community,** "Students are responsible for living the tenets established in ISU's Principles of Community: Respect, Purpose, Cooperation, Richness of Diversity, Freedom from discrimination, and the Honest and respectful expression of ideas. Visit ISU's Principles of Community webpage (<http://iastate.edu/principles>).
- Regarding name, gender identity and/or gender expression,** "Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me accordingly early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records."

Supporting student health and wellness:

- **Iowa State University is committed to proactively facilitating all students' well-being.** We welcome and encourage students to contact the following on-campus services for their physical, intellectual, occupational, spiritual, environmental, financial, social, and/or emotional needs:
 - Student Wellness call 515-294-1099 or via website (<http://studentwellness.iastate.edu>);
 - Thielen Student Health Center call 515-294-5801 (24/7 Medical Advice) or via website (<http://www.cyclonehealth.org>);
 - Student Counseling Services call 515-294-5056 or via website (<https://counseling.iastate.edu>);
 - Recreation Services call 515-294-4980 or via website (<http://recservices.iastate.edu>).
 - Students dealing with heightened feelings of sadness or hopelessness, thoughts of harm or suicide, or increased anxiety may contact the ISU Crisis Text Line (Text ISU to 741-741) or contact ISU Police Department 515-294-4428.
- **Basic needs.** To learn effectively, you must have basic security: a roof over your head along with a reliable place to sleep and enough food to eat (view the Food Security at ISU Student Wellness page, <https://bit.ly/foodsecurity-isu>). If you're having trouble with any of those things, please talk with me or the Dean of Students Office (email studentassistance@iastate.edu, phone 515-294-1020). Together we can work to meet those needs.
- **Responsible Employee:** Iowa State University is committed to creating an educational, work, living, and campus environment that is free from all forms of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and unlawful discrimination and harassment on the basis of protected class. As a responsible employee, I am responsible for reporting all incidents of prohibited sexual harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, and dating and domestic violence, to the university's Title IX coordinator. Students can choose to discuss their experiences confidentially with the following resources: ACCESS (Assault Care Center Extending Shelter and Support) at 515-292-0500; ISU Student Counseling Services at 515-294-5056; and Thielen Student Health Center at 515-294-5801.
- **Green Dot Project:** A green dot is any choice, behavior, word or attitude that promotes everyone's safety and communicates utter intolerance for power-based personal violence in our Iowa State University community. A green dot is anything you do to make our community safer. What is your Green Dot? Visit the Green Dot - Student Wellness website (<http://www.studentwellness.iastate.edu/greendot/>).

Promoting mutual respect and professionalism, "You are expected to treat your instructor and all other participants in the course with courtesy and respect. Your comments to others should be factual, constructive, and free from harassing statements. You are encouraged to disagree with other students, but such disagreements need to be based upon facts and documentation (rather than prejudices and personalities). It is the instructor's goal to promote an atmosphere of mutual respect in the classroom. Please contact the instructor if you have suggestions for improving the classroom environment. It is preferable if students discuss issues directly with the instructor; however, students may also leave a note in the instructor's mailbox or via Inbox in Canvas."

Relevant to the ISU Inclusive Language policy stating, "All university publications and communication, whether oral or written, shall use inclusive language and illustrations. Inclusive language refers to language that makes every attempt to include comprehensively all groups in the community. Whenever possible, selection of academic materials will also reflect efforts to uphold this university policy." Visit the Policy Library's Inclusive Language website (<http://www.policy.iastate.edu/policy/language>).

Related to usability, disability and design, "I am committed to creating a course that is inclusive in its design. If you encounter barriers, immediately let me know so that we can determine if there is a design adjustment to make or if an accommodation might be needed to overcome the design's limitations. I am always happy to consider creative solutions as long as they do not compromise the intent of the assessment or learning activity. You are also welcome to contact the Student Accessibility Services via phone at 515-294-7220 to begin this conversation or to establish accommodations for this or other courses. I welcome feedback that will assist me in improving the usability and experience for all students."

Related to University policies, "Students in this course are responsible for being familiar with the University's student rules and policies. Visit the ISU Policy Library website (<http://www.policy.iastate.edu/>)."

Making Your Syllabus Matter

Where will students access your syllabus? How do students know where to locate it within Canvas?

What do students see first on your syllabus? How do they know what to do next? Can they follow your instructions?

How can students obtain the resources they need to be successful in your course?

How do you project an inclusive learning environment in your syllabus and throughout your course?

How can students use your syllabus with visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, or neurological disabilities?

How will you know if students have reviewed the syllabus? A low-stakes quiz or assignment? Or, did you hide “hidden gems” in it?

How will you make your syllabus matter throughout the course? If you dump the document on students and rarely (or never) refer to it again, you’re telling them it doesn’t contain any information vital to their success. If you don’t treat your syllabus as essential, why should they? Now, how will you make it matter to your students?

References and resources

Locate the references and resources on the CELT Creating an Inclusive & Learner-Centered Syllabus webpage (<http://bit.ly/celtsyllabus>).

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