IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

Mindful and Learner-Centered Syllabus Toolkit

A clear syllabus sets the tone and demonstrates a commitment to student-centered learning. Your syllabus can be a helpful tool and guide for you and your students throughout the semester.

How to use the Toolkit: Included in this toolkit are strategies, actionable items, and examples of suggested wording for course content, communication, and teaching practices. Except for the Required and Recommended ISU Statements, you do not have to list every numbered item in your syllabus. Instead, you may choose what works best for you and communicate the information during class, through a video recording in Canvas, or both.

- A. Scan the Table of Contents (TOC, below) and identify a toolkit section that interests or is new to you.
- B. Read the section, reflect on your existing syllabus and teaching practice, and ask yourself, "How does this support student-centered learning?" Document the process with the suggested symbols below:
 - $\sqrt{\ }$ = I use this component or something similar
 - O = I am ready to add this component or something similar
 - X = I do not or would not use this component
 - * = I would like to try this in the future and may contact celt@iastate.edu for resources.

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| Make | Your Syllabus Matter |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Before | e teaching the course: |
| | Work collectively with your colleagues to ensure content is relevant and student-centered focused. |
| | Flexibility with "guardrails." Design the course with structure and policies that allow room for unexpected circumstances without ruining a student's chance of success. |
| | Consider the workload. Estimate the amount of preparation required for the course, remembering that students are often enrolled in several courses and have out-of-class responsibilities. Use the Wake Forest Course Workload Estimator tool (bit.ly/workload2) to assist. |
| | Record a syllabus video (3-5 minutes) highlighting the essentials students will want to know. |
| On the | e first day: |
| | Introduce and review your syllabus. Strive to anticipate learning needs by including content, policy explanations, and tools they will find useful for active, purposeful, and effective learning. |
| | Connect your students with the syllabus by engaging in active learning, a group discussion, a scavenger hunt, a Top Hat quiz (bit.ly/syll-questions), etc. Example questions: |
| | Why is logging in regularly and reading announcements helpful to succeeding online? |
| | When is the first reading assignment due? What is included in the assignment? |
| | Use a questionnaire (open-ended or adapted to a scale) to discover individual students' academic goals, concerns, or information that could help you plan relevant learning opportunities. See CELT's Who's in Class (bit.ly/whos-in-class). Examples: |
| | How does this course fit into your academic plans? |
| | Identify at least three strategies you plan to try/use to ensure your success in this course. |
| During | the semester: |
| | Refer to your syllabus often, modeling to students its importance as a source of information: |
| | At the beginning of class, project the syllabus page to show the class plan for the day. |
| | At the end of class, project the syllabus page to review, preview future topics, and remind students of upcoming assessments to solicit questions. |
| | After each class session, write notes on your syllabus: What went well? What didn't seem to go well? What questions or requests did students ask? What can you improve to help your students? Use these notes to improve your syllabus and assess the implementation of making changes. Consider using these notes as a source to document the progression of your teaching. |
| | Commit to continuous growth by inviting periodic feedback about the course and student learning. See CELT's Use formative feedback page (bit.ly/isu-plusdelta). |
| | At the end of the semester, show the course objectives and ask students to rate how well they fulfilled each objective and why. This exercise can help review objectives for the student (and inform next |

year's objectives). Please encourage students to save the syllabus for their records.

Overall Tone and Format

| 1 | L. | Tone: Use a positive and supportive tone in your syllabus. Examples: "Late work is eligible for 60% of |
|---|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | the original points;" "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." Consider switching from |
| | | "this course will" to "we will" |

2. **Accessible course design:** Ensure *all* your students can participate, engage, and enjoy your course's many opportunities and experiences. Limit the number of barriers a student might encounter by thoughtfully structuring course plans, communication (verbal and text), and affordable and accessible educational materials (digitalaccess.iastate.edu).

Course and Instructor information

____ 3. **Logistics:**

- Iowa State University, College, Department
- Course name (Full course title, course abbreviation with number/section XXXXX-1010-01)
- Semester/term, academic year
- Number of credit hours
- Meeting days/times: See ISU Schedule of Classes (classes.iastate.edu).
- Location with delivery mode (bit.ly/isu-delivery): In-person (room number/building), hybrid, online (synchronously or asynchronous), etc.
- Lab/discussions/recitations/studios, etc., with days/times and locations (if applicable), including equipment training information, safety instructions, etc.
- Include high-impact practice information such as field experiences or honors research.
- 4. **Contact information:** Full name(s), campus office location(s), email netid@iastate.edu, and office telephone number for each instructor, co-teacher(s), and grad assistant(s).
 - The best way for students to connect with you is: To email or attend the student office hours or use Canvas Inbox (Instruct students on enabling Canvas notifications so they will receive them).
 - Provide a response timeframe: Generally, how quickly will you respond to students?
 - o Example: Please reach out again if I do not respond within 48 hours. My inbox may be full, but I want to hear from you. I would appreciate the gentle reminder.
 - Tip: It's okay to only sometimes be available. You do not need to operate a 24-hour help desk.
 Take the time to set boundaries to preserve your creativity and autonomy.
 - Student office hours: Promote your outside-of-class hours for those seeking help or wanting to discuss your discipline, questions, concerns, or share any feedback. Maximize the number of students in an office or via web conferencing software (scheduled or drop-in).
 - Example: Student office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays from 1-2:30 p.m. in my office or via Webex. If these times conflict, please let me know, and we will try to find another time to meet. If you have questions or comments, I encourage you to use this time early and often.

Course Plan

6. Course prerequisites and foundational knowledge:

- List the course, skills, permissions, etc. (if applicable).
 - Example: It is a requirement that you complete <<PREREQUISTE>> before enrolling in this course.
 If you are underprepared for this course's underlying concepts, visit me to discuss resources that may help build foundational knowledge from << PREREQUISITE>>.
- Determine prior knowledge. Assess via a quiz, questionnaire, or assignment the class as a whole and individual students' prerequisite and baseline knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- Demonstrate the basic skill techniques as you teach new concepts with "how-to" details in all student examples and assignment answers. The "how-to" may be more than some students require, but when the subject is still new, outlining the details enables them to comprehend the method and validates their thinking.
- _____ 7. Teaching and learning approach: Share your teaching approach and what they can expect from the learning environment, the course, and you. If you are teaching online, this component is especially effective for creating and building your presence in the course.
 - Example: We will use asynchronous discussions to practice critical thinking and communication skills while following proper netiquette.
 - 28. **Use active learning** such as think-pair-share, turn and talk, and more to build community and connect to content. They will learn more, be more engaged, develop a peer network, and succeed.
 - Example: Intentionally pause for 90 seconds twice while teaching for 50 minutes. During those 90 seconds, request that your students review their notes, then ask a neighbor if they discovered anything unclear in those notes. Researchers found that students will recall more content if brief engagement activities are introduced into the lecture (Prince, 2004).
 - __ 9. **Course-level objectives**: Use CELT's Tips on writing course goals (bit.ly/coursegoals).
 - List 4-5 broad-based intended course-level learning objectives to reflect what students will know and demonstrate by completing the learning activities. Consider including life skill development such as team collaboration, critical thinking, etc. Use a grid with each objective connected to the assessments to achieve them, for example:

| Course Objectives | Activities or assessments to |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ourse Objectives | achieve the course objectives |
| u will trace the development of xxxxxx throughout the xxxxx. | Textbook readings & weekly |
| | quizzes |
| You will use clear communication techniques (written/verbal) to foster | In-class group work, papers, & the |
| inquiry, collaboration, and engagement in this discipline. | final project |

_ 10. Outcomes: Include university-wide, college, and program-level outcomes.

Course Materials

- ____ 11. **Specify required course materials:** Textbooks, lab/studio supplies, field equipment, ISU computer requirement (bit.ly/isu-tech-req), etc.
 - Tip: To save students time and money, please clarify the difference between *required* and *recommended* course materials and your expectations of what they need to succeed.

| 12. | ISU Course Reserves & Guides: See ISU's Library Instructor page (bit.ly/isulibinstruct). |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13. | Immediate Access Program: This ISU University Book Store course materials affordability initiative offers students digital course materials at a lower price than the standard print versions. Interested in the program? Review the Immediate Access Program site (isubookstore.com/immediate-access) or email immediateaccess@iastate.edu . |
| Course | Policies |
| 14. | Academic and classroom conduct: Clearly state your expectations for class attendance, absences, academic dishonesty, classroom disruption, and course ownership. Review the Student Code of Conduct (bit.ly/isu-stu-code). |
| | • Tip: Give students options if possible (e.g., attendance policy that allows missed day(s) without penalty, flexible or self-paced deadlines, and options for topics or modalities, such as written versus oral presentation). |
| | • Tip: Use CELT's Achieving Academic Integrity page (bit.ly/celt-integrity). |
| | Tip: Share expected conduct for a conducive learning environment; see the Effectively Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior toolkit (PDF) (<u>bit.ly/isudispdf</u>). |
| Assignm | ents |
| 15. | Offer multiple lower-stakes opportunities. Create opportunities and reinforce the process (with how-to details) for students to practice, receive feedback, and practice again. With multiple lower-stakes assessments spread over the semester, it is less problematic for a student to miss one than the possible negative outcomes of only high-stakes exams. |
| 16. | Be transparent: Create assignments and teach with a transparency framework (tilthighered.com): |
| | • Purpose: Why do they have to do the assignment? (e.g., content, skills, and relevancy) |
| | • Tasks: What are they supposed to do, and how do they do it? |
| | • Criteria: How are they being evaluated? (e.g., criteria for success, grading rubric) |
| Feedbac | k |
| 17. | Give timely and specific feedback: Frequent feedback provides students with a way to monitor their learning (e.g., graded and non-graded quizzes, tests, projects, Top Hat, reflection papers, etc.). They can adjust their learning strategies or seek additional support. |
| 18. | Deliver feedback tactfully and empathetically: Provide straightforward comments based on the assignment criteria. Encourage perseverance, focusing on developing efficacy and self-awareness. Consider a process and time for students to debrief, revise, and redo. |
| | • Tip: Use annotation, voice, or video tools in Canvas SpeedGrader to give additional details based on a grading rubric. |
| Grading | |
| 19. | Provide clarity: List all course requirements contributing to a student's grade: |
| | • Briefly describe each graded item (e.g., quizzes, exercises, projects, papers, etc.). |

• Describe where students submit assignments/projects (e.g., Canvas, in-person).

- Specify when, how, and where exams will be administered and how you (or proctors) will verify students for exam purposes (e.g., ISU Card).
- State when assignments are regularly due and when students can expect your feedback. These dependable routines and expectations can help students plan and prioritize.
- Do you assess participation? Explain why participation is useful and what counts (Gillis, 2019): Do you include attendance and timeliness, preparation for class meetings, small group work, and full-class discussions? Or provide opportunities to participate in other ways (e.g., attending student (office) hours, using the writing and media center or the academic success center, peer editing papers, or talking about course content with students outside of class).
- Clarify make-up options, extra credit, exams, and incomplete marks for students; see the ISU Catalog's Grading information (catalog.iastate.edu/academics/grading).
- 20. Provide explicit grading requirements: Ensure grading criteria and evaluation methods are explicit and connected directly to learning objectives.
 - Consider removing penalties, not grading all assigned work, and giving additional options for students to achieve points.
 - Share tools such as grading rubrics, assignment descriptions, and criteria to help your diverse community of learners.
 - Include components of the final grade, weights assigned to each course element, and whether grading is on a curve or scale, determine the distribution from a fixed mean, or assign a predetermined fixed percentage of the letter grade (A, B, C, etc.).
 - Use a pie chart to display each course element's weights (percentages).
- 21. **Provide up-to-date grades:** This step allows students to calculate their overall course grades.

Group Work and Peer Interactions

- 22. Community agreement: Support your students' interactions with peers and instill the ISU Principles of Community (iastate.edu/principles) and Netiquette at ISU (bit.ly/isu-netiquette) as community agreements. Refer to the agreements throughout the course; revise them when applicable.
 23. Group projects and expectations: Detail group work and course relevancy. Task students with well-defined activities to discuss strengths, personal learning goals, anticipated contributions, and formative feedback.
 Example: Students enjoy being engaged to practice using their new knowledge and skills, helping them to connect how your course applies to what they'll do after graduation. Share explicitly with
 - them to connect how your course applies to what they'll do after graduation. Share explicitly with students "WHY" you assign group work. What will students learn/gain from the experience? Foster the "HOW" students can communicate, listen, and create meaningful interactions with each other in collaborative activities during structured class time.
- 24. Reflect on peer interactions: Give students regular opportunities to reflect upon ways their peers enhance their learning at the end of a class with questions, such as: "What did you learn from someone else today? How did your peers support your learning today?"

Course Schedule with Weekly Overview

- ___ 25. **Promote student-centered deadlines:** Set deadlines for assignments at a time of day that connects to and promotes student learning. For example, instead of a Friday at midnight deadline, set and state in class: This assignment is due by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday to check your understanding of the topic before we move on to the next unit on Tuesday.
- __ 26. **Provide a calendar (e.g., week by week):** Outline substantive topics, reading requirements, assignment due dates, dates/times of any exams scheduled outside of class time, etc., in the visual planning grid (below). If necessary, revise it and ensure students receive the update.
 - Demonstrate the significance of student ratings and include the survey dates in your course calendar; see CELT's Strategies for Better Course Ratings (bit.ly/better-eval).
 - Use the Interfaith Calendar website (<u>interfaith-calendar.org</u>) to consider potential conflicts when scheduling projects, presentations, and exams.
 - Example visual planning grid: Project the syllabus page to show or review the class plan, preview future topics, and remind students of upcoming assessments to solicit questions.

| Week | Date with time & | Topic & Agenda | Readings & | List Assignments |
|-------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| # | location (if it | summary | recommended course | |
| | varies) | | material | |
| Wk. 5 | Sept. 22 (in- | Making it work: | • Required: Ch. 3 in book | Quiz #1 due after class |
| | person) | Nerve-muscle | Recommended: Course | During class: Lecture, Top Hat |
| | | synapse | reserves #4 | questions, & group work |

27. Include a subject-to-change disclaimer. Example: In extenuating circumstances, our schedule, policies, or procedures in this course are subject to change. We will make every effort to keep assignment due dates and scheduled exams. Any modifications will be communicated in writing, verbally in class, and published in the Canvas course.

Tips for Success

- 28. Academic support: Help students achieve the highest level of academic success of which they are capable by promoting and embedding resources throughout your course:
 - Academic Success Center (asc.dso.iastate.edu)
 - ISU Library (lib.iastate.edu)
 - Student Accessibility Services (sas.dso.iastate.edu)
 - Grad students: Center for Communication Excellence (cce.grad-college.iastate.edu)
- 29. **Care:** Encourage your students to practice self-care. Where barriers to such self-care exist, seek to put in place practices and resources to remove such barriers:
 - Empower students to develop strategies for overcoming obstacles to their academic success with self-care tools available 24/7 from TAO (bit.ly/tao-selfhelp).
 - Tip: Prioritize your well-being. Model the essentialness of self-care, sufficient sleep, and exercise to reduce your emotional reactivity and improve class, workplace, and campus climate. Use resources from ISU WellBeing (wellbeing.iastate.edu).

20. Share success strategies: Make clear your obligations to successfully teach the course and your expectations of students in your course. State these in your syllabus and discuss them throughout the semester with your students. If you feel comfortable, share a story about when you needed help while in school (or doing research). Doing so is a powerful way to show students that seeking help is a sign of strength and holistically connects them to you.

Examples of Student-Centered Statements

- _ 31. In addition to the recommended Accessibility Statement (p. 10), consider including a statement to support neurodivergent students:
 - Example: This course affirms Iowa State University's commitment to supporting learners in an accessible and reasonable manner. Neurodiversity includes students diagnosed with or displaying symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or related disorders that may affect your learning. Your instructor is dedicated to accommodating you in a proactive manner that helps you in this class. To support you, please read the Shared Responsibility Statement (bit.ly/sasresponsibility) and contact Student Accessibility Services by email at accessibility@iastate.edu or by phone at 515-294-7220.

Adapted from Michael Bugeja, Distinguished Professor, Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication.

- 32. Foster ISU Principles of Community: ISU's Principles of Community: Respect, Purpose, Cooperation, Richness of Diversity, Freedom from discrimination, and the Honest and respectful expression of ideas (iastate.edu/principles).
- 33. **Basic needs.** To learn effectively, you must have basic security: a roof over your head, a reliable place to sleep, and enough food to eat, ISU Student Wellness Food Security site (bit.ly/foodsecurity-isu). If you're having trouble with any of those things, please talk with me, your academic advisor, or the Dean of Students Office, email studentassistance@iastate.edu, or phone 515-294-1020. Together, we can work to meet those needs.
- 34. 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 emotional needs:
 - Student Wellness call 515-294-1099 or web (studentwellness.iastate.edu)
 - Thielen Student Health Center call 515-294-5801 (24/7 Medical Advice) or web (cyclonehealth.org)
 - Student Counseling Services call 515-294-5056 or web (counseling.iastate.edu)
 - Recreation Services call 515-294-4980 or web (<u>recservices.iastate.edu</u>).
 - If you or someone you know needs support now due to heightened feelings of sadness or hopelessness, thoughts of harm or suicide, or increased anxiety may walk into Student Counseling Services (8 a.m. 5 p.m., Monday-Friday) for confidential 24/7 trained crisis counselors call or text 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) or ISU Crisis Text Line (Text ISU to 741-741). Another option is to contact our ISU Police Department at 515-294-4428 (counseling.iastate.edu/in-crisis).

| 35. | Responsible Employee: Iowa State University is committed to creating an educational, work, living, |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | and campus environment free from all forms of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, |
| | domestic violence, stalking, and unlawful discrimination and harassment based on a protected |
| | class. As a responsible employee, I am responsible for reporting all incidents of prohibited sexual |
| | harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, 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 & Support) at 515-292-0500; ISU Student |
| | Counseling Services at 515-294-5056; & Thielen Student Health Center at 515-294-5801. |
| 36. | Green Dot: A Green Dot (bit.ly/isu-greendot) promotes everyone's safety and communicates utter |

Required & Recommended ISU Syllabus Statements from Faculty Senate

intolerance for power-based personal violence in our ISU community.

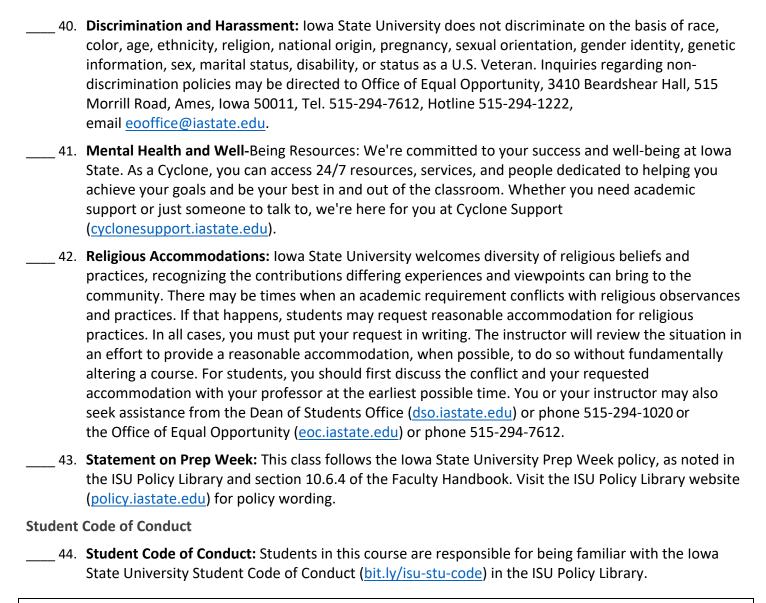
Note: The required and recommended statements are included in the Syllabus Statements feature in the Canvas course navigation (bit.ly/syllabus-canvas).

Required

37. **Free Expression:** lowa State University supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech (<u>freespeech.iastate.edu</u>) and the principle of academic freedom (<u>bit.ly/regents-academicfreedom</u>) 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

- 38. **Academic Dishonesty:** The class will follow Iowa State University's policy on academic misconduct (5.1 in the Student Code of Conduct, bit.ly/isu-stu-code). Students are responsible for adhering to university policy and the expectations in the course syllabus and on coursework and exams and for following directions given by faculty, instructors, and ISU Test Center regulations related to coursework, assessments, and exams. Anyone suspected of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct in the Dean of Students Office (studentconduct.dso.iastate.edu). Information about academic integrity and the value of completing academic work honestly can be found in the Iowa State University Academic Integrity Tutorial (bit.ly/isu-ai-tutorial).
 - ___ 39. Accessibility Statement: Iowa State University is committed to advancing equity, access, and inclusion for students with disabilities. Promoting these values entails providing reasonable accommodations where barriers exist to students' full participation in higher education. Students in need of accommodations or who experience accessibility-related barriers to learning should work with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to identify resources and support available to them. Staff at SAS collaborate with students and campus partners to coordinate accommodations and to further the academic excellence of students with disabilities. Information about SAS is available online at sas.dso.iastate.edu, by email at accessibility@iastate.edu, or by phone at 515-294-7220.



References

Locate references and resources on the CELT Effective Syllabus page (bit.ly/celt-syllabus).

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