Developing Course Syllabi

Before crafting your University of Toronto course syllabus:

1. Always check with your own division or home unit to identify the relevant local policies and procedures that need to be considered or applied when designing a syllabus for your course.

2. Consult University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) for assistance with identifying and arranging access to course readings, including clarification of copyright issues. UTL offers a syllabus service that assists instructors with making course readings available to students in a manner that respects Canadian copyright law and existing U of T licensing agreements and policies. Library staff will retrieve, scan, and provide links to material, as well as acquire eBooks suitable for course use whenever available. See the UTL website for more information and deadlines for submitting course syllabi to the syllabus service: https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/copyright/course-readings-and-reserves-support

3. Consult the Accessible Campus web site for information on how to design an accessible course syllabus. Note that, per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act or AODA, any course-related information for post-secondary courses in Ontario (e.g., a course syllabus) must be provided in accessible formats. See http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/tools-resources/educators-tool-kit/course-planning/writing-a-course-syllabus/

Essential Information

Course syllabi vary widely in length, format, content, and style. Where possible, the syllabus should be made available to students in both hard copy and online formats. All course syllabi should incorporate the following key information.
| Administrative details                                                                 | • Course name, number and designator (e.g., ENG 100F – Effective Writing) |
|                                                                                       | • Your name and contact information (e.g., office location and office hours, instructor or course web site address, email address) [Note: instructors are not required to provide their personal phone number to students but may do so at their own discretion] |
|                                                                                       | • Teaching Assistant (TA) name and contact information (as applicable) |
|                                                                                       | • Lab Technician name and contact information (as applicable) |
| **Course description**                                                                | • A brief paragraph describing the main focus and broad goals of the course – indicate the 2-3 “big ideas” of the course and the key skills to be developed |
|                                                                                       | • Student learning outcomes – what can students expect to know and be able to do by the end of the course? See the CTSI website for guidance on crafting learning outcomes: [https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/course-design/developing-learning-outcomes/](https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/course-design/developing-learning-outcomes/) |
|                                                                                       | • Requirements for the course (e.g., pre-requisites, language requirements) |
|                                                                                       | • Indicate whether the course is a pre-requisite for upper level courses |
| **Required texts or readings**                                                        | • Provide the details of any required readings for the course, including where students can obtain copies |
|                                                                                       | • Consult the Library for assistance with making course readings available, as noted above |
|                                                                                       | • Indicate if any of the course readings have been placed on short term loan |
|                                                                                       | • You may also wish to include additional recommended readings |
|                                                                                       | • Indicate what material is also (or exclusively) available within the institutional learning management system, Quercus, or the equivalent online course portal (if applicable) |
| **Links to relevant policies and learning supports**                                  | • Wherever possible, provide direct links to relevant resources and University offices where students can locate essential information to support their academic success and personal well-being. |
|                                                                                       | • See the CTSI website for lists of relevant links to consider including on your syllabus: |
|                                                                                       |   o Supports for students: [https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/u-of-t-resources/students/](https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/u-of-t-resources/students/) |
|                                                                                       |   o Grading-related policies and resources: [https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/u-of-t-resources/grading-practices-policies-uoft/](https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/u-of-t-resources/grading-practices-policies-uoft/) |

**Course work and grading**
Instructors should provide a clear breakdown of the work required in the course, including due dates and assignment weights. In addition, instructors should provide an overview of each assignment and its assessment criteria. (This information can be included in the course syllabus)
or provided in more detail within an “Assignment” section in Quercus and/or on a separate handout.)

Key dates and deadlines
This may be included under course work or in the grading portion or in the week-by-week breakdown (see below), or you might remind students in a separate section on course workload. You can also include information about required outings or special events (e.g., a field excursion or special invited guest lecture).

Course/departmental/divisional policies
• Instructors may wish to outline departmental, divisional, or their own policies regarding:
  - expectations for participation and attendance
  - deadlines for assignment submissions
  - use of the learning management system (Quercus) or equivalent online course portal
  - submission methods (e.g., in person or electronically through Quercus)
  - extensions or penalties for late work
  - process for requesting re-grading of course work, if applicable
  - process for signaling course absences and requesting make-up tests or exams, if applicable
  - use of laptops and/or cell phones during class time
  - email response time
  - academic integrity/plagiarism (not just the consequences, but also how to avoid plagiarizing in the first place – the University maintains a website on academic integrity that may be helpful: https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/)

Copyright in instructional settings
If students wish to audio record, video record, photograph, or otherwise reproduce lecture presentations, course notes or other similar materials provided by instructors, they must obtain the instructor's written consent beforehand. Otherwise all such reproduction is an infringement of copyright and is prohibited. In the case of private use by students with accommodation needs, the instructor’s consent will not be unreasonably withheld, but the student must have registered for the accommodation through Accessibility Services (see “Adaptive Technology and Assessment”). See the CTSI website for additional information on:
• Copyright considerations - https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/audio-video/copyright-considerations/
• Privacy considerations - https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/audio-video/privacy/
• Sample statements to include in a course syllabus about the recording of course activities - https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/audio-video/sample-statements/

Student support and accommodation
Note any relevant academic and personal support services (for example, campus or college writing centres, counseling services, study centres, family care offices for students with parental responsibilities, etc.) and include a statement that reminds students who require
accommodation to register with Accessibility Services: 
https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as/register-accommodation.

Week-by-week breakdown of in-class activities
Instructors may wish to provide a weekly breakdown of the material to be covered in class (and in tutorials, if applicable). Required and recommended readings may also be highlighted. It can also be helpful for students to see in this same schedule when assignments are due, and also when work on key assignments should be started, to help students (especially first year students) with time management.

USING YOUR SYLLABUS AS A LEARNING TOOL

Your syllabus can be an important source of information about the course material and about learning in your field. This approach involves moving beyond a document that exclusively lists rules and due dates towards a course guide that invites students into the subject area and the broader discipline, and generates excitement for the learning to come. You can develop a syllabus that describes:

- **Course goals and outcomes.** This might include an outline of the disciplinary content and skills that students will learn through the course, but might also address broader skills or topics (e.g. research methodology) that may contribute to or draw on other courses or fields of study.

- **Key topics and the ways in which they are connected and prioritized.** This can even be presented graphically, via a “course map”: See Nilson, L. (2007). *The graphic syllabus and the outcomes map: Communicating your course.* San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.

- **The ways in which information can be organized, evaluated, and debated in your field.** You might provide a brief overview or some background to the study of the topic itself (for example, when it emerged as a field or formalized discipline, different ways in which it has been researched and taught), some history of the course (for example, new topics or sections that have been added or eliminated, new teaching methods or elements of course), or some information about how to perform scholarly work in the discipline (for example, an introduction to how to read particular kinds of texts or sources within the course, how to evaluate materials and sources external to the course through the lens of the discipline, and/or how to apply the course material in different contexts).

Together, these elements create what is often referred to as a “learner-centred” syllabus. For more tips on using your syllabus as a learning tool, see the web site of the *Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CELT)* at Iowa State University at 
http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/preparing-to-teach/how-to-create-an-effective-syllabus or additional references are noted in the list of resources at the end of this guide.
OPTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You might also want to include some or all of these additional pieces of information to help your students prepare for the course:

- A description of your expectations for course activities, for example:
  - what meaningful in-class or online participation looks like
  - what successful preparation for in-class or online activities and assignments involves
  - what a reasonable work pace might be, including suggested timelines for keeping up with weekly course work and preparing assignments
  - the process for requesting additional feedback on course work
- Any additional supplies, materials, or equipment that are required or might help students succeed in the course
- Responses to “Frequently Asked Questions” about the course or the course material
- Your personal teaching philosophy statement and a description of your own pedagogical approaches/instructional strategies
- Other information about your own research area or your own interest in and connection to the course topic

SAMPLE STATEMENTS FOR YOUR COURSE SYLLABI

The following statements may be included on your course syllabus. For assistance in drafting additional statements, please feel free to contact the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation at ctsi.teaching@utoronto.ca.

On Academic Integrity:
Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student’s individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:
- Using someone else’s ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor in all relevant courses
- Making up sources or facts
• Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment

On tests and exams:
• Using or possessing unauthorized aids
• Looking at someone else’s answers during an exam or test
• Misrepresenting your identity

In academic work:
• Falsifying institutional documents or grades
• Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor’s notes

Sample statement to include in the syllabus:

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources (see http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/).

On Turnitin:
Turnitin is a tool that will assist in detecting textual similarities between compared works. Turnitin (can also be referred to as Turnitin.com in University of Toronto communications) is an efficient way to identify common writing issues and deter plagiarism in course assignments. Note that the tool does not identify plagiarism; it is up to the individual instructor to determine if passages highlighted by the tool represent plagiarism. Instructors using this tool can create a Turnitin Assignment in their Quercus course to which students submit their assignments electronically for analysis. With the integration of Turnitin into Quercus courses, instructors and students should not access the program through the Turnitin.com website.

Before using Turnitin instructors must adhere to U of T’s Turnitin Conditions of Use.

Key things to note about using this tool:

• Students must be informed at the start of the course that the instructor will be using Turnitin. Ideally, a notice about use of the tool and guidance for using the tool should appear in the course syllabus.
The course syllabus **must include the following statement (as is):**

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

For more information on Turnitin, please send a query to **q.help@utoronto.ca.**

**On Accommodation:**
The University welcomes and includes students, staff, and faculty from a wide range of backgrounds, cultural traditions, and spiritual beliefs. You may wish to include statements in your syllabus that reference the University’s policies and resources related to accommodations for students with different needs and religious backgrounds. The below pieces of text contain language that can be modified and developed into statements on accommodation for inclusion in your syllabus.

**Students with disabilities**
The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs. For more information on services and resources available to instructors and students, please see the Accessibility Services website – note that this is a tri-campus office, serving all three campuses of the University of Toronto: [https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as](https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as).

**Religious observances**
The University also provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences, and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities at these times. For more information, and to link to the University’s policy on accommodations for religious observances, please see the web site of the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students: [https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/policies-guidelines/accommodation-religious/](https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/policies-guidelines/accommodation-religious/)
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


Other interesting resources:

Open Syllabus Project: https://opensyllabusproject.org/