

Making the Syllabus Work for You and Your Students

August 19, 2022

Before we start



Let us know if you can hear us when we do **Audio checks**



Turn on live captions for closed captioning (see screenshot on right)



Have your Activity files ready

During the session



Please keep your microphones muted

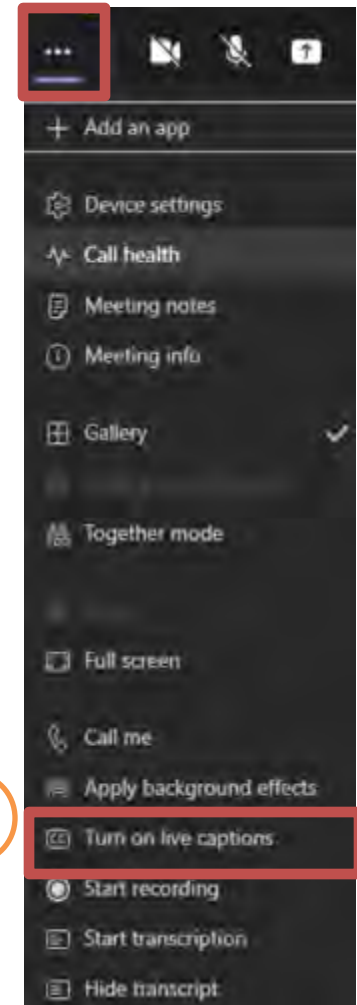


Type questions and comments into the **Chat**

After the session



Complete **Feedback Survey** (link sent via email)



Megan Burnett



Tamara Bahr



Sarah Shujah



CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT & INNOVATION



@UofT_Teaching

Making Your Syllabus Work for You and Your Students

Using the
syllabus as a
learning
tool



**Please
have ready
the Activity
documents
sent out in
advance**

August 19, 2022

Megan Burnett, Associate Director, CTSI

Tamara Bahr, Manager, Teaching, Learning & Technology, CTSI

Sarah Shujah, Liaison Librarian, UTSC



CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT & INNOVATION

An aerial photograph of the University of Toronto campus. In the foreground, there are green trees and a building with a blue roof. In the middle ground, a large green lawn is visible, surrounded by various university buildings. In the background, the Toronto skyline is visible, including the CN Tower. The sky is clear and blue.

Land Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

<https://indigenous.utoronto.ca/about/land-acknowledgement>

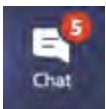
ACCESS CHECK

A shared responsibility

We understand access to be a shared responsibility between everyone in this space. We will strive to create an accessible space that reduces the need for you to disclose a disability or impairment for the purposes of gaining an accommodation. In doing this together, we strive to welcome disability, and the changes it brings, into our space.

Is there anything about this (virtual/physical) space (light, sound, temperature, layout) that we should address now?

Are there any other access needs that might affect your participation in the workshop that we could also address?



Option: to send private message > New message > To:



Option: provide link to an anonymous form



AGENDA

- Land Acknowledgment
- Agenda
- ACTIVITY 1: Syllabus Quiz
- Best practices and findings from the literature:
 - setting the tone with the syllabus
 - using the syllabus to motivate learning
 - different syllabus models
 - how students use the course syllabus
- ACTIVITY 2: Syllabus Review
- Building your syllabus:
 - core (and required) elements
 - what do you need to know about syllabi at UofT?
 - library resources
- TOP 10 LIST: 10 actions to create a learning-focused syllabus
- ACTIVITY 3: Syllabus Assessment (U ofT syllabus SOCA03)
- Final tips and next steps

INDIVIDUAL
READING &
LARGE
GROUP SHARING

BREAK
OUTS



ACTIVITY 1: SYLLABUS QUIZ

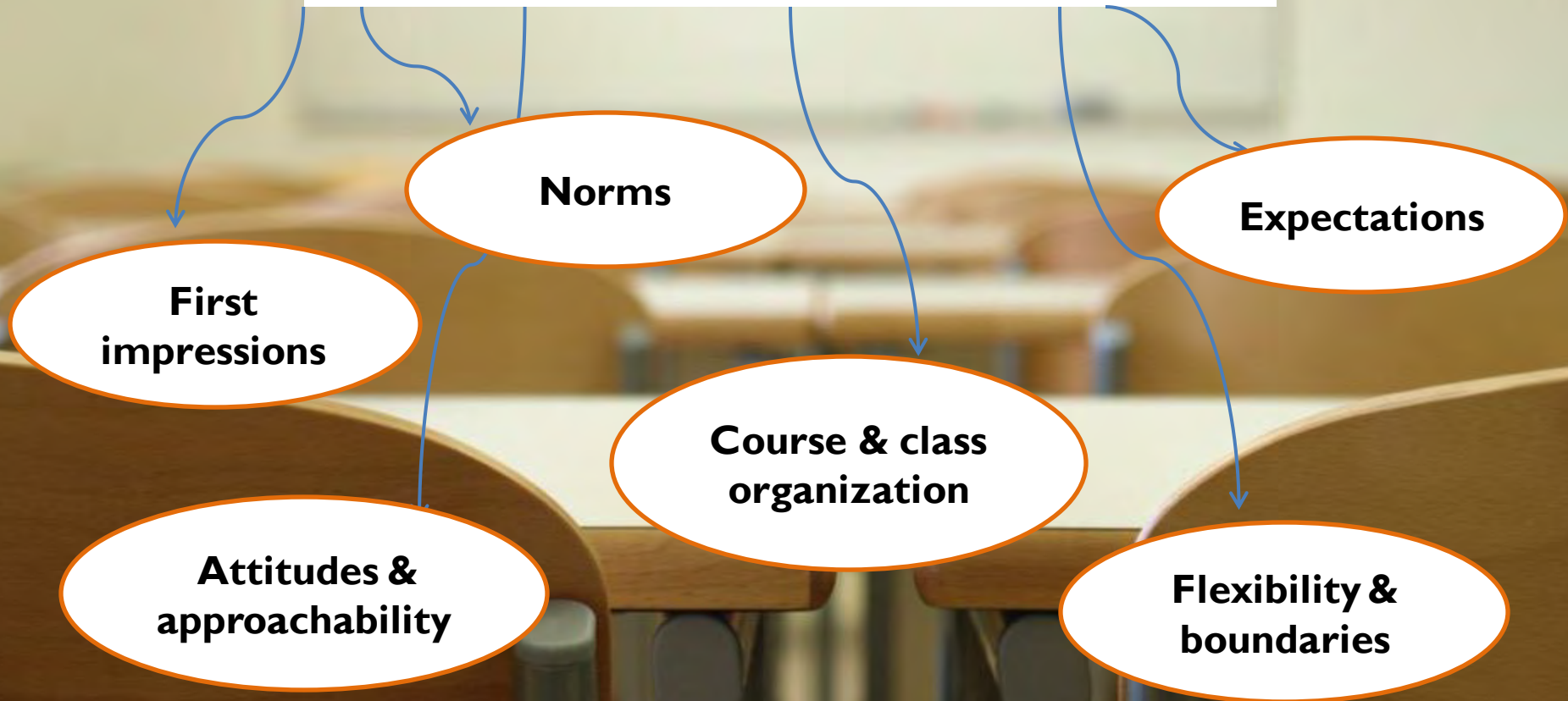
- 1) What do you consider “essential information” to include on the syllabus?
- 2) What should you not put on the syllabus?
- 3) What is the best way to communicate the syllabus to students? (How do you do this?)
- 4) How often do you refer to your syllabus during the term?



SYLLABUS QUIZ DEBRIEF

SETTING THE TONE

Your syllabus represents both
you and your *discipline*.
As such, it communicates:



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT...?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this course is to give the student an overview of the nature, grounds, and explanatory power of various sociological theories and how these are applied to various areas of social life. We will conceptualize theory as science, philosophy, and politics with a focus on how these forms influence methodology. The ultimate aim of this course is to understand that there are a multitude of perspectives when considering "society" and that "society" is itself a cultural construct. This course will also serve as preparation for entrance into a graduate sociology program.

COURSE STRUCTURE

1. The readings will be our springboard for class lectures and discussion. You are required to keep up with the readings and will be responsible for these as well as class lectures.
2. A liberal arts education means literally to "liberate" your mind. Discussion is of the utmost importance. You have paid money to be sitting here. **DO NOT ALLOW ME TO LECTURE WITHOUT ASKING QUESTIONS IF YOU ARE CONFUSED OR UNCLEAR ON THE MATERIALS.**

Only VICTIMS allow this to happen to them. If you are having problems, chances are someone else is too! If you feel uncomfortable about your progress in the course, I believe I have a reputation for being VERY approachable, so please see me during office hours or make an appointment. We can work it out!!!

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TONE!

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- **Extra credit is never available.**

NOTE: Your understanding or misunderstanding of an assignment, due dates, quiz or exam dates, and the like is your responsibility. You should seek clarification well before you have a problem.

Grading and Course Requirements

The approximate weight of each course requirement is indicated by the number of points possible. The final grade is based on the following:

- Exams 100 points each
- 4-5 assignments (including a term paper) Points will be indicated on the assignment.
- **Class participation**

Other information

#1 key to success? Read assigned chapters in advance of the lecture & discussion. It is to your advantage to bring your textbook to every class. Participate in class.

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CLARITY!

Other information

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“...[the] course syllabus is one place where an instructor directly can influence students’ interest and motivation. [...]

Only recently has there been concern for influencing the students’ interest, attitude, and motivation about the course with the syllabus.”

Ludy et al. (2016)



How students use the course syllabus

Most attention:
important dates,
how grades are
calculated

**Moderate
attention:**
course goals and
objectives



**Do I
belong
here?**

Least attention:
“academic dishonesty policies, textbook information, and basic
course information such as course number and credit hours,
withdrawal dates, and course prerequisites”

How students use the course syllabus



- Students' attention to different parts of the syllabus varies over the term
- Students look at syllabus less frequently as term progresses

Syllabus can influence student behaviour:

“Students reported **greater willingness to seek the instructor’s help when the syllabus included the offer of help** than when it did not.” (our emphasis)



ACTIVITY 2: SYLLABUS REVIEW

Please consult the U of T syllabus **ENGA02** sent in advance of today's session – it can also be found at the **link in the chat**.



This activity has two parts:

1. Quiet time for individual review of syllabus
2. General take-up of key impressions in large group.

TOTAL TIME: 10 MINS



Syllabus Review

PART 1 5 MINUTES

INDIVIDUAL READING

- Skim the syllabus
- What strikes you the most?
- What impressions of the course or the instructor do you have?
- What questions do you have?
- What tone does the syllabus convey?

PART 2
5 MINUTES

LARGE Group Debrief...

Respond in the chat or raise hand to use your mic
What struck you the most?

- What impressions of the course or the instructor did you get?
 - What questions do you have?
 - What tone does the syllabus convey?
-

- **Core elements of the syllabus**
 - **Elements required at U of T**
- **Working towards a learning-focused syllabus**



Building your syllabus...

TRADITIONAL SYLLABUS

- **Administrative details:** course location, frequency and length of classes, instructor's office location, instructor's availability, contact information for all staff associated with delivery of course
- **Required texts**, readings, materials
- **Course work** (descriptions of all assignments) and **grading scheme**
- **Key dates** and deadlines
- **Weekly schedule**

- **Course description**
- **Student learning outcomes**
- **Essential skills**
- **Policies**
 - Email policy
 - Late policy
 - Academic integrity
 - Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters
 - Code of Student Conduct
- **Student support** and accommodation



ELEMENTS REQUIRED AT U OF T

Special statements related to:


- use of "Plagiarism" detection (textual similarity software)
- accessibility (check with your division)
- academic integrity (check with your division)
- use of 3rd-party tools – considerations – **tip sheet**


Syllabus must be:


- **AODA-compliant**
(AODA=Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act)
- **copyright-compliant**
(use the Library's syllabus service!)

ACCESSIBLE CAMPUS

<http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/tools-resources/educators-tool-kit/>

 ACCESSIBLE
CAMPUS

 UNIVERSITY OF
ONTARIO
UNIVERSITIES



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UNDERSTANDING ACCESSIBILITY

REFERENCE LIBRARY

TOOLS & RESOURCES

IDEA COMPETITION

ABOUT

Writing a Course Syllabus

ON THIS PAGE

- [Are you designing or revising a course syllabus?](#)
- [General tips on writing an accessible course syllabus](#)
- [Make the document accessible](#)
- [List campus supports and policies](#)
- [Include an accessibility statement](#)
- [Sample course accessibility statement](#)
- [Choosing course materials](#)

Are you designing or revising a course syllabus?

All students benefit from an organized, well-written and complete syllabus. They are also better equipped to plan their semester if they have a clear idea of their educators' expectations, the demands of their courses and the due dates of their assignments. With these tips you can make your course and syllabus accessible to the greatest number of students.

General tips on writing an accessible course syllabus

- Communicate clearly the essential requirements of the course to all students, including learning outcomes.
- Include a course outline that covers the required readings, assignments and defined expectations.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

[Recommended Resources](#)

[Administrator's Accessibility Toolkit](#)

[Educator's Accessibility Toolkit](#)

[Teaching Tips](#)

[Accessible Science Laboratories](#)

[Course Planning](#)

[Accessibility in E-Learning](#)

[Consideration of Student Accessibility when Teaching Outside the Classroom](#)

Writing a Course Syllabus

[Developing Courses](#)

[External Resources](#)

[Innovate: Creating Accessible Learning Environments](#)

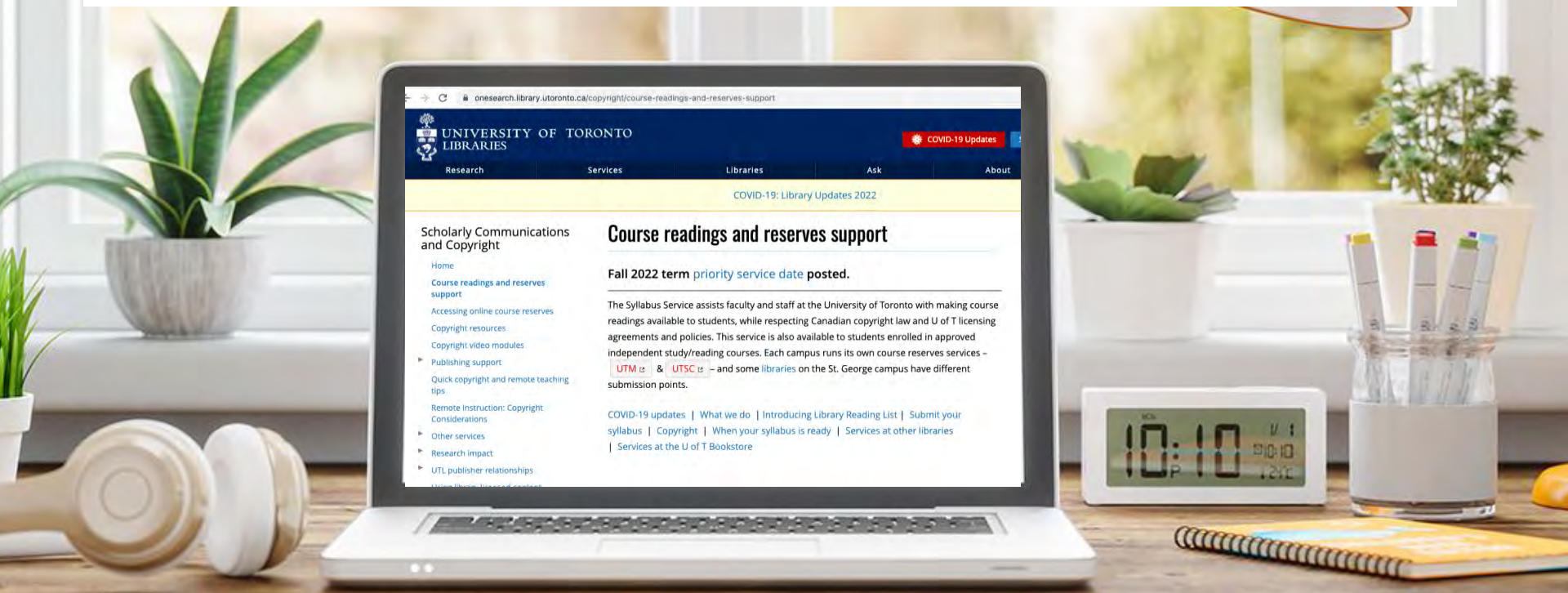
[Advancing Accessible Teaching and Learning Environments](#)

[Understanding Barriers to Accessibility: An Educator's Perspective](#)

[Introduction to Accessible Education](#)

Leveraging the Library – Course Readings

[Syllabus Service & Course Reading](#): Use the Course Reserves and Syllabus Service! Our staff will provide durable links, retrieve and scan your readings, even purchase eBooks if available. <https://uoft.me/5M1>



Leveraging the Library – Liaison Librarians & Instruction

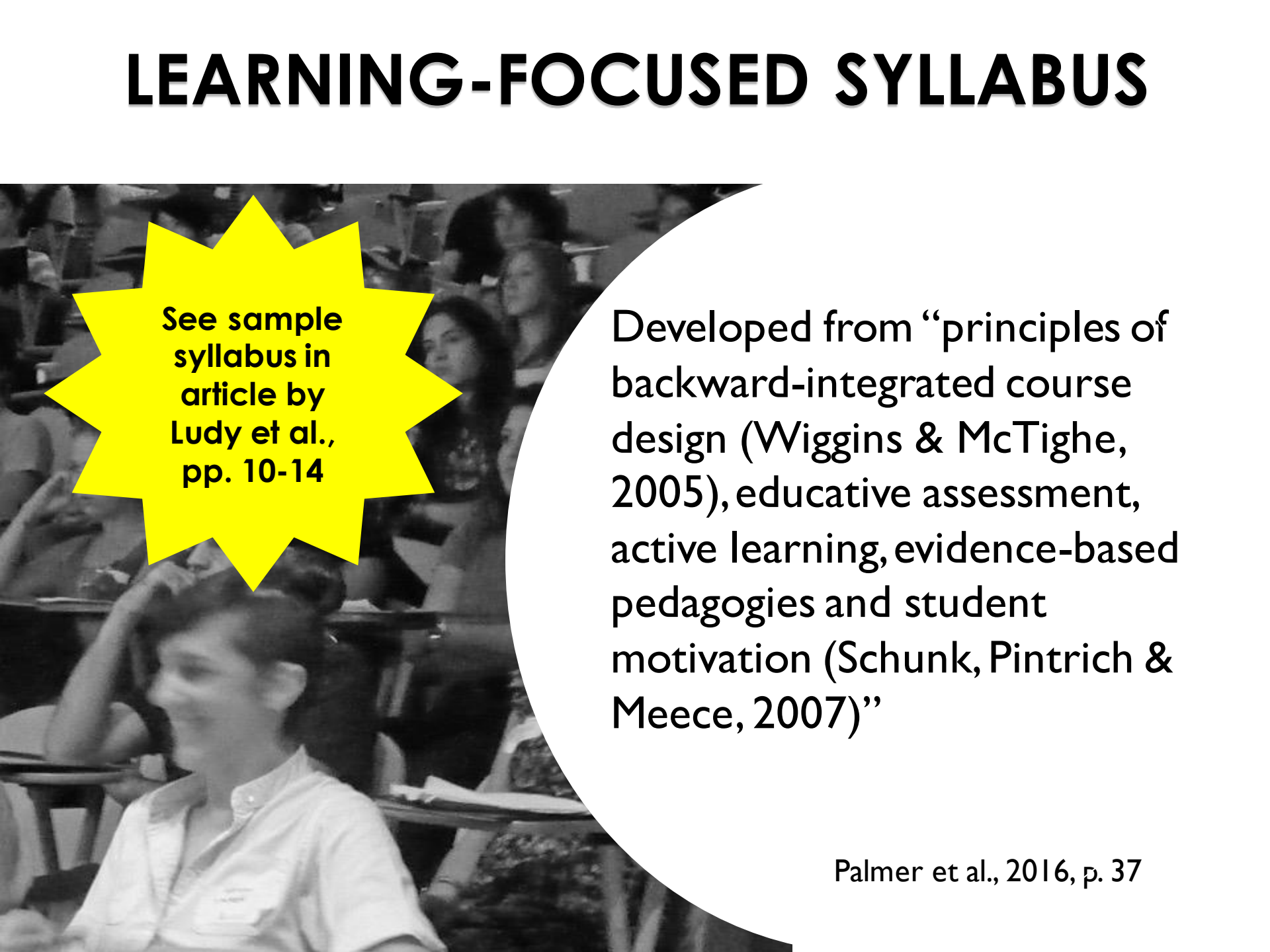
Take advantage of your Liaison Librarian

<https://uoft.me/5M4>

- Locate ideas for course readings
- Add their name and contact information on the syllabi for student support
- Consider scheduling a time in the syllabi for a library workshop(s)
 - Library orientation
 - Curriculum integrated instruction (including [information literacy](#) assignment support & design)
- Add a link to the [course specific guide](#)



LEARNING-FOCUSED SYLLABUS



See sample
syllabus in
article by
Ludy et al.,
pp. 10-14

Developed from “principles of backward-integrated course design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), educative assessment, active learning, evidence-based pedagogies and student motivation (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece, 2007)”

Palmer et al., 2016, p. 37

LEARNING-FOCUSED SYLLABUS

Characterized by:

- Engaging, question-driven course descriptions
- Long-ranging, multi-faceted learning goals
- Clear, measurable learning outcomes
- Robust, transparent assessment and activity descriptions
- Detailed course schedules, “framed in what Ken Bain (2004) calls ‘beautiful questions’”
- A focus on student success
- Inviting and motivating tone

SYLLABUS DESIGN FOR LEARNING





TOP 10 LIST

1. Place your course in a broader learning context
2. Locate the course within your frame of experience and expertise
3. Define student success in the course
4. Identify instructional methods – provide rationale
5. Describe learning activities and related expectations – link to assessments, provide rationale
6. Identify learning resources linked to skills development as well as mastery of content
7. Provide information for students on how to learn on their own and/or with others
8. Provide guidance around time management and stress management
9. Provide a framework for effective note-taking (themes, units, key debates, big ideas)
10. Design with the reader/learner in mind (accessible, easy to navigate)

ACTIVITY 3: SYLLABUS ASSESSMENT

Please have ready these 2 documents:

- the U of T syllabus **SOCA03**
sent in advance of today's session and also found at the **link in the chat**
- the **Syllabus Review Checklist**
sent in advance and also found at the **link in the chat**



This activity has **two** parts:

1. Quiet time for individual review of syllabus and completion of Syllabus Checklist
2. Discussion of your assessments in break-out groups

TOTAL TIME: 20 MINS



Syllabus Assessment

PART 1 10 MINUTES

INDIVIDUAL READING & CHECKLIST COMPLETION

- Skim the syllabus
- Complete as many sections of the Syllabus Checklist as you can for one of the provided Syllabi
- Try to assess the syllabus from the **perspective of the learner** – as a student in the course, how would you view the document?



Syllabus Assessment

PART 2 **10 MINUTES**

BREAK-OUT ROOMS

In your small group, discuss your highlights for each of the following areas of the SOCA03 syllabus:

- Instructor information
- Course information
- Student support
- Overall tone of the syllabus?
- What excites you about the course? What worries you?



QUICK CHECK-IN

- What did you notice about **both** syllabi?
- Similarities? Differences? What struck you in working with these two syllabi?
- What have you learned that you can use?

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a black pen, poised to write on a white piece of paper. The paper is part of a notebook with yellow edges. The background is blurred, showing a wooden surface.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Key considerations when designing/reviewing your own course syllabus:

- Where on your syllabus is the essential information? How is it presented?
- Do you present your big course goals and more specific learning outcomes? (Note these are not the same thing.)
- Does it identify essential skills and learning supports?
- Does it define student success in the course?
- Does it provide a framework for organizing key course concepts?
- How could your syllabus be modified to turn it into a learning tool?

FINAL TIPS

Use the Library!

- Syllabus Service
- Copyright Office
- Faculty Liaison
- **Consult CTSI online tips!**
- Digital syllabus
- Accessible syllabus
- Statements on:
 - wellness
 - academic integrity
 - accessibility
 - plagiarism detection
 - land acknowledgement

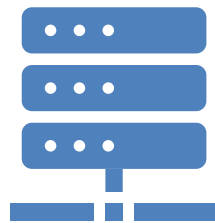




INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES



Quercus



Course Information
System Syllabus Builder



Divisional
Resources

NEXT STEPS

**Tune Into Teaching Workshop Series
continues until August 31!**

[https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ctsi-
events/tune-into-teaching/](https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ctsi-events/tune-into-teaching/)

Setting the Tone for Success: The first day of class and
beyond – August 23

Designing Better Assignments – August 24

Myths and Realities About Grading – August 25

Quick Start Quercus – August 31



NEXT STEPS

- Request a consultation with CTSI staff

<https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/consultations/request-form/>

- Consult with colleagues
- Review key University and Divisional policies
- Consider...what can your syllabus **do** and not just say?





THANK YOU!

ctsi.teaching@utoronto.ca

www.teaching.utoronto.ca