



AccessAbility Services
Understanding a College Syllabus

A course syllabus is an important tool for success in college. It is, first of all, a contract between you and the professor, explaining what they expect of you, and what you can expect from them. A syllabus is a document that a professor writes and distributes to provide an overview of a course and important information. The syllabus is usually distributed on the first day of class or online before your first meeting. A syllabus may give you an idea right away if you should keep or drop the course, and it can also give you a first impression of the professor's teaching style and personality. The syllabus is your guide to the class and can be used to plan your semester. Remember to put all of your syllabi in a place where you can find them, and refer to them often.

The syllabus contains the following important information:

- Information about the course
 - Course name and number.
 - Course meeting time and location.
 - Number of credits.
 - Website (if available).
 - Required course materials.
 - Available course resources (tutoring, old exams, books on reserve at the library, etc.).
- Information about instructors
 - Professor's name and contact information.
 - Office location and Office Hours (times your professor is in the office and available for meeting without appointment).
 - Information about Student Assistants (SA's).
- Expectations
 - Class rules and behavior expectations (ex: attendance, use of cell phones, respecting others, talking in class).
 - Guidelines – make sure you look at these throughout the semester because you don't want to lose points for not following directions!
 - Policies regarding late assignments.
 - Health and Safety Issues.
- Course components
 - List of items that make up your grade (ex: midterm, final, papers, assignments).

- Percent each component is worth.
- Grading policy
- This section gives a sense of how much work this course will be.
- Pay particular attention to how much of your grade is based on participation and attendance!
- Required texts and other supplies
 - Textbook, supplemental books, and articles
 - Books may be available in the campus bookstore or the library.
- Course schedule
 - Topics and readings with associated dates. You are expected to do all the readings when they are assigned through the syllabus.
 - Test dates
 - Assignment deadlines
 - Your professor may not remind you when something is due. It is your responsibility to make sure you turn assignments in on time based on the date on the syllabus.

What to do with the syllabus once you receive it:

- READ IT! All of it. Highlight it.
- Put every important date in your planner right away.
- Store it in a place where you can find it easily.
- Review it throughout the semester to make sure you are following the professor's rules and guidelines for submission.
- Ask your professor questions you have about the syllabus right away!