

Syllabus Recommendations for General Education Courses

Syllabi are often the initial meeting point between faculty and students, and the distribution of a syllabus at the beginning of a course is the first move in establishing the parameters of the student-teacher learning relationship. As such, our syllabi should be carefully constructed and well thought-out documents that reflect our pedagogical values, methods, and goals. The General Education Advisory Committee recommends the following guidelines in writing syllabi:

First, the UC Faculty Senate has already offered its own useful guidelines for the minimum information that must go in all syllabi.

Resolution on Course Syllabi

Passed by Faculty Senate, May 10, 2001

The Faculty Senate advises faculty that course syllabi should include the following information:

- Instructor's Name, Phone Number, Email Address, Office Number, and Office Hours;
- Short description of the class, including a basic statement of the objectives of the class and the content to be covered;
- Indication of the Breadth of Knowledge (BoK) area(s) of the University of Cincinnati General Education Program, if any, that the course has been designated as fulfilling. If the course has been designated as only partially meeting a BoK area, those other courses that combined with the course satisfy the BoK area should be listed;
- Indication of the Baccalaureate Competencies of the University of Cincinnati General Education Program that the course addresses;
- Prerequisites and co-requisites;
- Titles and authors of required texts;
- Tentative schedule of class meetings with an indication of topics to be considered, assignments and due dates, and examination dates;
- Course Web Page Address (url);
- Electronic Communication Policy;
- Class Attendance Policy;
- Pass/Fail Option, Audit Policy, and Withdrawal Policy;
- Class Grading Policy;
- Academic Integrity Policy;

Suggested Statement: The University Rules, including the Student Code of Conduct, and other documented policies of the department, college, and university related to academic integrity will be enforced. Any violation of these regulations, including acts of plagiarism or cheating, will be dealt with on an individual basis according to the severity of the misconduct.

- Special Needs Policy;

Suggested Statement: If you have any special needs related to your participation in this course, including identified visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, communication disorder, and/or specific learning disability that may influence your performance in this course, you should meet with the instructor to arrange for reasonable provisions to ensure an equitable opportunity to meet all the requirements of this course. At the discretion of the instructor, some accommodations may require prior approval by Disability Services.

- Other information pertaining to the class

Further, the Faculty Senate recommends that:

- A. At the discretion of course instructors, complete course syllabi and other course material may be posted on the web in lieu of hard copy distribution. In the event that this option is used, the course instructor should assure that the students in the course can readily access this material.
- B. All faculty should review the University of Cincinnati Policy With Regard to Copyright as this policy might relate to the development and presentation of course material.

(<http://www.uc.edu/facultysenate/syllabl.html>)

Second, in line with the suggestions from the Faculty Senate above, we strongly recommend that your syllabi reflect *in clear and accessible language* how your courses advance the core baccalaureate competencies: critical thinking, effective communication, knowledge integration, and social responsibility. Obviously, not all courses will focus on all four competencies, but we should make clear to students in our syllabi which competencies are addressed in our courses. For example, the English Composition Program has a standard syllabus used in all first-year writing courses that clearly outlines for students the two competencies—effective communication and critical thinking—that are forwarded in composition courses. The following text appears in English Composition Program syllabi:

English Composition comprises a set of university-wide required General Education courses that are designed to help you develop knowledge and skills as you work to achieve the four Baccalaureate Competencies. The Baccalaureate Competencies are the critical abilities shared by all educated persons, and they comprise a major component of the General Education Program. There are four Baccalaureate Competencies: Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Knowledge Integration, and Social Responsibility. English Composition focuses on **Critical Thinking** and **Effective Communication**.

Critical Thinking is the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and ideas from multiple perspectives. The educated individual thinks critically and analytically about subjects. Critical thinking includes the capability for analysis, problem solving, logical argument, the application of scholarly and scientific methods, the accurate use of terminology, and information literacy. The particular critical thinking skills vary from discipline to discipline. **Effective Communication** embraces aural, visual, and language arts, including the ability to read, write, speak, and listen; it is the effective use of various resources and technology for personal and professional communication. The educated individual must be able to understand and convey ideas in diverse contexts, using appropriate communication and information technology resources and skills. Among important language capabilities are proper usage, appropriate style, and the ability to formulate a coherent, well-supported argument using language appropriate to academic and public discourse. For more on the Baccalaureate Competencies, see the General Education Website, from which this information was drawn (<http://www.uc.edu/gened/>).

Additionally, syllabi in the English Composition Program show exactly where each course in the first-year composition sequence—ENGL 101 and 102—fall in relation

to one another, as well as how they build on learning and experiences in preceding courses. A chart clarifies the relationship of the courses to one another:

Both composition courses are part of a sequence that has been carefully designed to help you develop both critical thinking and effective communication. These competencies must be developed and honed over time, which is why we have sequences these courses in the following manner, which must be taken in order:

Course	Description	Goals
English 101	English 101 is designed to help students become better writers, readers, and critical thinkers. It allows students to understand the concept of voice, the significance of audience and purpose, and the potential power of their own writing processes. In 101, students learn that writing is an on-going process and that their written projects are works-in-progress. Therefore, rather than turn in one version of a written project for a definitive grade, students work on their writing throughout the quarter and include their strongest work--"final" drafts of each project--in a final portfolio at the end of the term.	After successful completion of English Composition I, students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on a specific purpose; • Anticipate the needs of different audiences; • Recognize the differences among kinds of writing situations and genres; • Respond appropriately to different types of rhetorical situations; • Demonstrate a basic understanding of academic writing; • Recognize the difference between writer-based and reader-based prose.
English 102	Like 101, English Composition 102 emphasizes critical thinking and persuasive writing skills. Students learn to read critically and analyze an essay's or book's content as well as its particular writing strategies. Throughout the quarter, they also consider their own experiences in the context of those they learn about through researching and reading work from professional writers and writing from other students.	Building on skills developed in English 101, students successfully completing English 102 should be able to do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the complexity of different kinds of arguments/issues; • Recognize that different writing situations call for different strategies; • Recognize that texts are in conversation with other texts;

	<p>Thus their own writing combines personal experience with assertions about other writers' ideas and rhetorical strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and demonstrate the ethical responsibility of the research writer to explore multiple perspectives on a topic; • Understand and demonstrate the ethical responsibility of the research writer to cite sources and report findings accurately.
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Three, it is important that students understand both the specific goals for each course they take and how major assignments or assessment measures are connected to those goals and serve to measure students' progress toward achieving them. While a syllabus might not contain descriptions of all assignments to be given in a particular course, a sense of at least the *major* assignments should be given, and their connection to major course goals should be made clear.

For more assistance in composing effective syllabi, please visit the UC Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (<http://www.uc.edu/cetl/>).