

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



THE SYLLABUS

Syllabi serve several important purposes, the most basic of which is to communicate the instructor's course design (e.g., goals, organization, policies, expectations, requirements) to students.

Course syllabi should be distributed to students during the first meeting of the course and submitted to the department's office prior to the start of the semester, unless required to do so earlier by the Curriculum Committee.

For the faculty member, the syllabus:

- Is a guide to plan, implement, evaluate and improve instruction.
- Maximizes efficiency and effectiveness and minimizes anxiety for students.
- Is the basis for selection of content, methods and materials.
- Facilitates the ability to design instructional experiences.
- Allows testing of accomplishments and evaluation of effectiveness of experiences offered.
- Enhances learning as it allows students to organize their own efforts to accomplish those goals.
- Facilitates curriculum design and the ability to sequence courses, identify gaps and eliminate overlap.
- Improves ability to determine performance standards, and consequently, the suitability of instruction.

Other functions commonly served by a syllabus include:

- To convey enthusiasm for the topic and expectations for the course
- To demonstrate how the course fits into a broader context ("the big picture")
- To establish a contract with students by publicly stating policies, requirements, and procedures for the course
- To set a tone for the course, and articulate how we understand our role as teachers and their role as students
- To help students assess their readiness for the course by identifying prerequisite areas of knowledge
- To help students manage their learning by identifying outside resources and/or providing advice
- To communicate course goals and content to colleagues

REFERENCES:

"The Syllabus", Design & Teach a Course, Learning/Teaching Principles, Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence, Carnegie Mellon University,
<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/syllabus/index.html>

Tom Ockerse, "Syllabus for a syllabus."

Michael JV Woolcock, "Constructing a Syllabus: A Handbook for Faculty, Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows." The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, Brown University, 3rd ed., 2006.

Syllabus Components

The Curriculum Committee requires that all new syllabi contain the following information:

Course Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Course number (if known) and title ● Semester and year being offered ● Number of credits ● Class meeting time and location (if known) ● Instructor and TA information (if known) ● Instructor's office location and hours ● Instructor's contact information ● Course website (if relevant)
Course description	Brief, general introduction to the course: its scope, purpose and relevance to the field and its role in the curriculum (one paragraph; 5-6 sentences)
Course schedule	A breakdown of topics and assignments for each class (readings, homework, project due dates). <u>Major</u> assignments, reviews and exams, field trips, tests, final critiques for each class day.
Important Note	For 1-credit workshops: one-credit workshops meet for 20 contact hours following a studio model. Workshops must span the length of the full 13-week semester (12 weeks plus crit week). Typically, workshops are scheduled as four concentrated weeks of instruction (for five hours each meeting) with eight weeks of access/work-time/prep-time culminating in a final review. Other workshop schedules may be appropriate as long as it spans the length of the full semester and meets for 20 contact hours.
Important Note	For all other credit designations: must reflect a schedule that contains 12 weeks of instruction plus crit/exam week (excluding spring break and holidays)
Course Goals/Course Objectives	Intended results of instruction, what the course is supposed to accomplish reflected in what the student has gained.
Student Learning Outcomes	Define learning outcome according to what the student will know and be able to do as a result of the course and as they might relate to— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge ● Orientation of interest and value ● Development of sensitivity toward something ● Skills, use of tools, methods ● Critical analysis
Course Organization/Method of Instruction	How the course is organized and taught, e.g., lectures, discussions, studio, individual or group presentations, independent work, field trips.
Course Requirements	Expected student work and participation: assignments, exams, projects, crits, department/divisional lectures, exhibitions, and performances. Describe the nature and format of major assignments, expected length of written work, and provide due dates for all assignments and exams. Distinguish between graduate level and undergraduate level requirements.
Grading Policy/Evaluation Criteria	The value and standards of quality used to determine the success of a student's performance. A breakdown of elements that will comprise the final grade and an explanation of grading policies

	and how elements are weighted—contact, participation, motivation/attitude, craftsmanship, visual skills, conceptual skills, risk-taking, assignments, projects and exams, attendance (in and out of class events). Describe any extra credit options. Describe what grades mean.
Course Policies and Expectations	Policies concerning attendance, participation, tardiness, academic integrity, missing work, missed exams, food in class, laptop and cell phone usage, etc. Describe any expectation regarding student behavior and what the student can expect from the instructor.
Reading Materials, Resources	Required and optional books (author, title, edition), reserve readings, course readers/packs, software, materials/supplies/tools/equipment (for studio use and homework), other resources (websites, blogs).
Out of Class Activities	Field trips, etc. (include estimation of cost)
Estimated Cost of Materials	Approximate cost of course materials needed to complete assignments
Disability Statement	Sample Syllabus Statement
Pre- and Co-Requisites	Necessary skills and/or courses.
Shop Policies	Shop hours, tools/equipment available to support class projects/assignments safety requirements and procedures.
Academic Code of Conduct	Policies concerning cheating, plagiarism, falsification/fabrication, unauthorized reuse, etc.: Academic Code of Conduct
Diversity/Civility Statement	See samples*

*SAMPLE DIVERSITY/CIVILITY STATEMENTS:

1. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. Your suggestions about how to improve the value of diversity in this course are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

In addition, in scheduling exams, I have attempted to avoid conflicts with major religious holidays. If, however, I have inadvertently scheduled an exam or major deadline that creates a conflict with your religious observances, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make other arrangements.

2. In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different than ourselves. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from one another. Please respect each others' opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind. Finally, remember to keep confidential all issues of a personal or professional nature that are discussed in class.

3. The RISD community is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and the development of integrity. In order to thrive and excel, this community must preserve the freedom of thought and expression of all its members. A culture of respect that honors the rights, safety, dignity, and worth of every individual is essential to preserve such freedom. We affirm our respect for the rights and well-being of all members.

4. Membership in the academic community places a special obligation on all members to preserve an atmosphere conducive to the freedom to teach and to learn. Part of that obligation implies the responsibility of each member of the RISD community to maintain a positive learning environment in which the behavior of any individual does not disrupt the classes of teachers or learners.

It is the responsibility of the individual faculty member to determine, maintain and enforce the standards of behavior acceptable to preserving an atmosphere appropriate for teaching and learning.

Contact Hours Chart:

	Credits	Contact Hours	Measure
FALL, SPRING, SUMMER			
Studio	3 or 6	5 or 10	Weekly
Lecture/Seminar/Workshop	3 or 6	3 or 6	Weekly
Seminar/Studio Blend	6	10	Weekly
1-Credit Workshop	1	5	4 Weeks
WINTERSESSION			
Studio	3 or 6	10 or 20	Weekly
Lecture/Seminar/Workshop	3	6	Weekly