

## Building Your Syllabus Supporting a Learner-Centered Classroom

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### Purpose of the Syllabus

- Curriculum contract between college and student  
    The professor is the representative of the college
- Gives an overview of the course
- Articulates expectations of the instructor
- Tells students how they will be evaluated

### A Learning-Centered Syllabus

Focuses on the ways in which the syllabus can be **useful** to the learner

- to help the learner plan for studying and completion of assignments
- In knowing clear expectations of the instructor

### The Syllabus

should:

- put the course in a proper context
- tie objectives to instruction and to evaluation
- provide information about all course components, not just assignments
- become a learning tool and reference

### What does MC require?

- Course number and course name information, and credit hours
- Semester and year
- Meeting Times, building and room number
- Course description, including prerequisites
  
- Instructor Information:  
    Name, office location, office hours,  
    How to reach: telephone, email

- Course Outcomes
  - These are what students are expected to be able to do upon completion of the course
  - They should be written in such a way that they are precise, observable, and measurable

An outcome answers the question, “What behavior can a learner demonstrate to indicate that s/he has mastered the knowledge or skills specified in the instruction?”

Benjamin Bloom’s *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* can be helpful in writing objectives.

### Why Have Course Outcomes?

- To facilitate and guide learning
- To guide instructor in planning the course
- To guide instructor in developing tools for evaluating learning outcomes

Course Outcomes should move students beyond recalling information to **higher order thinking**, such as

applying what they have learned,  
analyzing information  
synthesizing information,  
and evaluating information

### Example of a course outcome

*Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to differentiate among the three branches of government.*  
(rather than understand the three branches of government)

### Course outcomes are **not**

- Strategies or activities instructor plans to use in the class  
*e.g., Students will work in small groups*
- Objectives of the instructor  
*e.g., Students will participate in class discussions*

### MC Requirements continued

- Resources
  - Texts and other required reading
  - Optional resources
- Grading
  - What are the components of the final grade?
  - Is there a percentage or point value of each graded assignment
  - What are the standards for grading? In other words, what is your criteria for an “A”, a “B”, etc.
  - What must students do in order to pass the course, regardless of grade average in course? (In other words, are there certain requirements that a student must complete, regardless of overall grade average?)
  - Makeup Policy
  - Late Policy
  - Audit Policy

### College Academic Policies

- Attendance (and withdrawal from class)
- Academic Honesty
- Classroom Conduct
- Cancellation of Classes
- Support Services for Students with Disabilities

### **Policy regarding Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

A statement similar to this one should be in your syllabus, *"Any student who may need an accommodation due to a disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours. A letter from Disability Support Services authorizing your accommodations will be needed."*

- ❖ Disability Support Services are confidential and should not be discussed while other students are lingering in the classroom. In addition, faculty members should not agree to services unless the DSS letter specifies them. Call the Disability Support Office on your campus if there are any questions.

### Other College Policies

- College Policy regarding emergency evacuation procedures

The College has published a [Quick Reference Guide](#), with basic information on these emergency procedures. It includes an explanation of the communication alert codes utilized by the college, key phone numbers, tips on what to do in the event of various types of emergencies, and specific evacuation plans for individual college facilities. All members of the college community are urged to familiarize themselves with this information and to keep a copy of the guide handy.

For more information about emergency procedures, visit the College Website at: <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/news/emergency/>

When you have College Policies noted in syllabus, it is a good idea to give the source of policies.

### **Highly recommended to include or attach to the syllabus**

- Course Calendar to include
  - Dates of classes
  - Topics and activities
  - Assigned reading
  - Due dates for assignments
  - Special events: e.g., field trips, guest speakers, etc.

A table often displays the course calendar very clearly, for example:

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading	Assignment due
Monday January 23	Introductions and Introduction to the Course		
Wednesday January 25	The importance of instilling a love of literature	Chapter 1	Reaction Paper: What appealed to me about <i>Owl Moon</i> .

#### **In summary, the Learning-Centered Syllabus**

Should accomplish certain goals:

- ✓ Define students' responsibilities
- ✓ Define instructor's role and responsibilities
- ✓ Provide a clear statement for intended outcomes
- ✓ Establish standards and procedures for evaluation
- ✓ Inform students of course logistics
- ✓ Establish a pattern of communication
- ✓ Offer some flexibility for revision
- ✓ Be reasonable in workload expectations
- ✓ Be distributed and discussed on the first day of class

In a study of Professors of the Year by the Carnegie Association for the Advancement of Teaching, the following similarities were found in their syllabi:

- Detailed precision
- Clearly stated course objectives
- Day-to-day schedule identifying specific reading and other assignments & due dates
- Clear standards re: attendance, grading standards, make-up policies
- Faculty contact information

## Resources

1. *Faculty Handbook*, Tab 1  
Section VIII - Class Procedures, Standard Format for Syllabus at MC (p. 66)  
or (digital version)  
[http://www.mcinfonet.org/faculty/04\\_06\\_Fac\\_Handbook/Documents/04\\_06\\_Fac\\_Hbk.pdf](http://www.mcinfonet.org/faculty/04_06_Fac_Handbook/Documents/04_06_Fac_Hbk.pdf)
3. For syllabi of many courses at MC, go to  
<http://montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/studevgt/Advising.htm>

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