OTEI

2025-26 SYLLABUS GUIDE

This syllabus guide presents suggestions for course-specific information in the flow of a typical syllabus, with a focus on creating transparency and high structure as well as suggesting ways that you can be welcoming and supportive of all students.

The guide has been simplified this year to represent two changes at Clemson: first, you will be building your syllabus in Simple Syllabus, an app embedded in your Canvas site, and two, your Canvas site has accessibility checker features that help you notice where you need to build more accessible materials. For questions on the functions of Simple Syllabus please enter an IT Help ticket or contact Clemson Online directly.

Suggestions included below can help you create a student-centered, inclusive syllabus, one that appeals to students and directs their learning in a productive way. These suggestions are based on research, highlighting some top evidence-based practices, and created by OTEI with input from campus leaders.

What to Do With This Template

- **Open Simple Syllabus**
- **Use any of the suggestions below in writable blocks in Simple Syllabus**
- **Add blocks ("+" sign is at the bottom of the Syllabus page) for elements you wish to add**
- **Many "blocks" of information can be moved up or down**
- **Decide if any text or images are more appropriate on the Canvas Home page for your course.**

Each syllabus lists **four required policies** which are now automatically added by Clemson Deans.

Other policies and resources that are very helpful to students can be added by you in additional blocks OR on a Canvas Course page.

To create a student-centered, welcoming syllabus

- **Use welcoming & encouraging language**
- **Introduce yourself**

- **Create an accessible syllabus by presenting information in more than one way—including graphics or images (marked with "Alt Text" of course!)**

- **Explain educational and/or disciplinary "jargon"**

- **Offer resources on learning—these can also be added to the Home Page**

- **Provide transparent grading criteria**

- **Be transparent on requirements, due dates, and other expectations**

Your syllabus is often the *first impression* students have of you and your course. Think about how you can create a sense of wonder for your students. Use your syllabus to share what drew you to the field and the types of questions that you hope will inspire and challenge students throughout the course.

Further instructor resources are at the bottom of this document, including a **workload estimator and a dates generator.**

Course Syllabus

Course Title and Course Number:

[Required] Include section number. Automatically generated.

Include start and end dates, and other major dates from the academic calendar (last day to drop without a W, fall break, etc.). These dates can be entered in the Canvas calendar.

Class Meeting Time and Place:
[Required] Help students find the building with a map or photo or (for new students) instructions to access "my Clemson". (In this example, the arrow points to the classroom at the end of the Watt building, second floor.)

Time to Wait:
[Required to have a statement by a faculty member of how long students must wait if they are late.]

Information on Modality:
[Required] Examples - in-person, fully online, hybrid, flipped, synchronous, asynchronous, etc.

Instructor Name:
[Required] Autoloaded, but check! As applicable, include information for multiple instructors or teaching assistants. Name, email, phone, office, office hours are required for all people responsible for teaching the course section.

Add your photo (with "alt text") for a more inclusive and accessible syllabus! You can even include pronunciation advice. There is a "pencil" edit symbol beside your name.

In this new example in Simple Syllabus, Dr. Hoffman provides a friendly avatar, and several options for how to reach her during office hours. (Used with permission.)

Dr. Jessie Hoffman
Email: jhoffm8@clemson.edu
Title: Co-Director of the Social Media Listening Center, Lecturer
Office Hours:
Tuesday/Thursday: 10:00 A.M - 12:00 P.M. (in office), Friday 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. (Zoom) , and by appointment

Instructor Email:
[Required] Consider indicating how quickly students can expect a response to their inquiries.

> *Hint: Feel free to adopt/adapt the following statement: I do my best to respond to email inquiries within 24 hours, excluding weekends and university holidays.*

If you respond more quickly to text, you can add a cell phone or app contact (like Discord, MS Teams, Slack, etc.). Be sure to let students know this method will likely be answered sooner than email and/or that it is your preferred method. *Note: Teams and Slack are used officially

by the university. Other apps may not appropriately follow FERPA guidelines. Contact CCIT for more information.

University Office Phone:
[Required; another phone is optional]

Office Address/Office Number:
[Required] Add a campus map (with "alt text" instructions) to add an accessible touch.

Student Hours:
[Required] office hours are now often referred to as "student hours" by faculty. These include virtual locations (Zoom, Google Hangout, etc.) as well as physical spaces. Holding some online hours helps students with choices to access you for help. Simple Syllabus refers to Office Hours, so you can add a note of explanation if you wish.

> *Hint: The new approach, to be more "friendly" and clear with students, is to rename office hours as student hours. You can also frame this time as opportunities to get to know your students better. For example, instead of saying "My office hours are X", you could state, "During my scheduled office hours [or student hours], I look forward to the opportunity to discuss course concepts, assignments, or any other items that you would like to talk about. I design this time to get to know you and welcome you to join me for casual conversations about the course and life in general."*

Course Description

[Required] Insert the **current catalog description** here. This can not be preloaded by Simple Syllabus so you need to copy from the catalogue.

If you have a more specific description that is unique to your course section, you may include it here in addition to the catalog description, e.g. "In this section, we will…."

Prerequisites

[Required] List any prerequisites for your course here or state there are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Overview

Provide a brief sketch of the course goals and the course arc. This is an area where you can personalize the approach to this course (your motivations, intentions, etc.) This is also an area where you can help evoke wonder in your students.

> *Hint: For example: "The goal for this course is that **we** will learn…" or "This (topic) is crucial to developing a better world (more detail here of course)." "By the end of the course we will understand and be able to present (details on the concluding project and goals)."*

Take advantage of this section and use student-centered, welcoming language to share what makes your course great. This section moves beyond the course catalog description and really highlights the key topics in the course.

Value Statement

Suggested for a more student-centered approach! Use this space to articulate the value of the course for your students. How do you explain the value of this course? You might consider answering questions such as, how is this useful and relevant to students? How does it help them achieve their goals? This statement provides students with a rationale that is positive and inspiring.

Just like the Course Description, the Value Statement can help students see the relevance of the course. Even if it is a required course, students can start to see why it is important and how they will benefit from taking the course.

Learning Objectives / Outcomes
[Required]

- List your COURSE objectives/outcomes here. These are short statements using action words such as describe, examine, recognize, illustrate, apply, construct, develop, use, analyze, correlate, evaluate, distinguish, predict, create, design, integrate, produce, etc., based on Bloom's educational taxonomy. They often start with the phrase, "After completing this course, you will be able to: "
- DEPARTMENT / PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES: Many programs ask certain classes to include sets of programmatic outcomes. Check with your department head.
- GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: If the course you are teaching is part of the General Education curriculum, the syllabus must include the specific General Education student learning outcome(s), as stated in the current Undergraduate Catalog.

Ensure that your outcomes are measurable and that your course assignments should align with these outcomes. For assistance with writing learning outcomes, contact OTEI and visit OTEI's website for resources or to schedule a consultation service.

Required Materials

[Required] Replace this text with a list of materials that students will need to successfully complete your course. Use text and mark images with Alt Text. This list includes textbooks as well as equipment (computer, webcam, microphone, etc.), software (a word processing program, PowerPoint, Excel, etc.), and other materials (remote proctoring codes, notebooks, links to online resources etc.).

[Required, per federal policy] The titles of all textbooks and whether they are required or recommended must be submitted in advance to the campus bookstore website. If no text is

assigned, indicate that in the form. (Students are not required to purchase textbooks from the campus bookstore, but instructors are required to submit the information to the bookstore.)

> *Hint: Consider Open Education Resources (OER) that are free for students and represent diverse content. Check out OER information at Clemson Libraries.*

Learning Environment

This section sets the tone for the type of learning environment you want to create for you and your students. It can include information such as:

1. Class environment (methods of instruction, role of the student, role of the faculty member—such as expectations you can have of each other, like being on time)
2. Types of collaboration they can expect, incorporation of peer-to-peer teaching and learning, uses of demonstration for tools and projects, types of activities or performance tasks they can expect in labs or lectures

> *Hint: This is an opportunity to really set the stage for an inclusive learning environment. Reframe how you approach these topics, avoid negative (must) language, and use positive language such as:*
>
> - *Participation provides unique opportunities to learn from your peers and myself. Therefore, attendance in class is important. Your voice is key to this course.*
> - *The course exams are scheduled and in your course outline. In fairness to all students, please make sure you have these dates/times noted in your calendar. If you have to miss an exam, it is critical that you communicate with me as soon as possible to let me know. Make-up exams will be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

Describe the learning environment for the student—both in- and outside- of class – so that students understand your expectations and reasons for the course structure. Transparency goes a long way in building trust with your students.

How to Be Successful in this Course

This section could include several general guidelines, e.g., estimated amount of time to spend on preparation, assignments, participation in class discussion, use of supplemental teaching materials, to more sophisticated rubrics related to student performance on various evaluation measures (e.g., exams, assignments, projects). One part can be the shared responsibilities (which you can discuss and amend, with students!)

(A Clemson Faculty member created this example statement, in support of our students)

As a student you may experience a range of personal issues that can impede learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug concerns, feeling down, sadness, difficulty concentrating, lack of motivation, or other issues. These mental health concerns may impact your academic performance or your participation in daily activities. It is very important that you ask for help when you are struggling. Please reach out to me or to Clemson's mental health services to guide you to resources that will help.

Topical Outline

[Required] This can be a list of topics from the textbook (if applicable) or a list of course content topics, dates for each topic, and objectives. **You can incorporate an alignment with Canvas modules and student learning objectives/outcomes** (see chart below).

Topic / Module	Learning Outcomes	Assessments

Major Assessment/Grading Activities

[Required] Your assessment instructions provide students with a rationale and, whenever possible, with an *authentic (meaningful and real) task*. Pace and scaffold your assignments (i.e., the tasks to completing assessments are transparently clear to students and build on each other) throughout the course, and **at least one is scheduled early in the semester—all of which supports effective student learning.**

Including the weight for each exam (including final exam), paper, report, discussion, participation, or other assessment activity **is required** in the syllabus.

For undergraduate courses that also offer 6000 level graduate credit, clearly indicate the additional requirements **as required** in Clemson academic policy.

The following table may be useful to you for your syllabus, or you can use the topics outline above:

Major Assessment Activities

Assessment	Weight/Points	Due Date	Short Description	Link to Learning Outcome(s)
Required: list major assignments, due dates and weight, including the final exam.				

> *Hint: Create Canvas assignments and use the Gradebook so students can see expectations and grading criteria and have due dates integrated into their Canvas calendars. Using all these Canvas features creates a more inclusive, accessible course for your students.*

Course Feedback

Giving students feedback is considered one of the TOP 10 methods of effective student learning. Feedback can be both formative (informal, non-graded) and summative (graded). In this section of your syllabus, add an overview of your feedback techniques. For ideas on feedback, see the OTEI webpage on assessment resources. Examples include online or paper surveys called Classroom Assessment Techniques.

> *Sample syllabus language:*
> *Included below is a brief overview of all methods I will use to gather your feedback regarding the course, including formative (informal) feedback tools:*
> *(List feedback methods here!)*

In the Canvas Commons, OTEI includes survey tools you can copy and use in your course, including feedback surveys. Navigate the Canvas menu to find the Commons and search #OTEI.

Grading System

[Required] Provide your students with grading information. The following table may be useful to you for your syllabus, as you provide the point ranges/percentages associated with each letter grade.

Letter	Points/Percentages
A	
B	

C	
D	
F	

You may give grades of A, B, C, D, F, I, P, NP and W, in accordance with academic regulations. For more information on this grading system and what each grade means, please see *the "Grading System" section of the Undergraduate Catalog*.

Grading Policies

[Required] Outline your grading policies, including whether you round up or not, the anticipated turnaround time on graded work, etc. Consult the Deans' class regulations letters on fair grading procedures and approach your department /college for more information. The OTEI website also has resources available.

Late Work

Include your late work policy. Be very specific about whether you accept late work and any penalties that students might accrue for turning work in past the due date.

> *Hint: Approach grading and late work policies with a pedagogy of kindness. Recognize that students have multiple things that need their attention and/or that life happens. Have policies that offer flexibility when possible.*

AI Statement

[Required] Uses of AI fall under university policy recommendations. Currently, unauthorized uses of AI are treated as potential plagiarism cases (see Academic Integrity below). Per the Faculty Senate, instructors must include an AI statement of some kind in the syllabus, to explain their approach to the use of AI in your course. Consult this OTEI guide on how to write an AI statement, with four sample statements; this help sheet is also linked in Simple Syllabus for you to access. Reviewed by the Division of Undergraduate Learning and the Graduate School as compatible with the university's policies on academic integrity.

Need further direction for graduate-level use of AI in teaching and research? See this statement from the Graduate School.

(Documents are located on our Clemson Resources page along with other AI resource links.)

Absences

[Required] As per Clemson academic policy, course instructors may use *reasonable* academic penalties which reflect the importance of work missed due to unexcused absences, since absence from class is detrimental to the learning process. Course instructors who penalize students for unexcused absences must state attendance requirements as related to the grading, on the course syllabus and keep accurate attendance records. See the Academic Regulations section of the current Undergraduate catalog or the Policies and Procedures of the Graduate catalog, both located at the Course Catalog home page.

Notification of Absence

The **Notification of Absence module in Canvas** allows students to quickly notify instructors (via an email) of an absence from class and provides for the following categories: court attendance, death of immediate family member, illness, illness of family member, injury, military duty, religious observance, scheduled surgery, university function, unscheduled hospitalization, other anticipated absence, or other unanticipated absence.

The notification form requires a brief explanation, dates and times. Based on the dates and times indicated, instructors are automatically selected, but students may decide which instructors will receive the notification. This does not serve as an "excuse" from class. It is a request for an excused absence and students are encouraged to discuss the absence with instructors, as the instructor is the only person who can excuse an absence. If students are unable to report the absence by computer, they may reach the Office of Advocacy and Success. Students with excessive absences who need academic or medical assistance can also contact the Office of Advocacy and Success.

Inclement Weather or Emergency

Regularly scheduled exams and assignments may need to be adjusted based on unforeseen circumstances. The Faculty Senate Scholastic Policies Committee suggests the following policy, which you may copy into your syllabus:

> *Any exam that was scheduled at the time of a class cancellation due to inclement weather will be given at the next class meeting unless I contact you otherwise. Any assignments due at the time of a class cancellation due to inclement weather will be due at the next class meeting unless I contact you. And any extension or postponement of assignments or exams must be granted by me via email or Canvas within 24 hours of the weather-related cancellation.*

Standard Academic Policies

These four policies required, and accurate language is pre-loaded into your syllabus:

An accessibility statement, the Title IX statement, the Academic Integrity statement, and the emergency preparedness statement is required in the syllabus.

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

Tools

Date Generator: McDonald, C. Rice University.

Workload Estimator: Wake Forest Center for Advancement of Teaching.

Open Syllabus Explorer: An international research site with searchable syllabi and informative blog.

Syllabus Guide, Reflection Sheet, and a Quick Guide to Using Bloom's Taxonomy are all on our Teaching Resources Syllabus and Course Design page (OTEI)

Selected References

Cullen, R., & Harris, M. (2009). Assessing learner-centeredness through course syllabi. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34, 115-25.

Gannon, K. (n.d.) How to create a syllabus: Advice guide. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-to-create-a-syllabus/

Harnish, R. J., & Bridges, K. R. (2011). Effect of syllabus tone: students' perceptions of instructor and course. *Social Psychology of Education*, 14, 319–330.

Ishiyama, J. T., & Hartlaub, S. (2002). Does the wording of syllabi affect student course assessment in introductory political science classes? *Political Science & Politics*, 35, 567–570.

Lang, J. (2006). The promising syllabus. *The Chronical of Higher Education*. August 28. https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-promising-syllabus/?cid2=gen_login_refresh&cid=gen_sign_in

Palmer, M. S., Bach, D. J., & Streifer, A. C. (2014). Measuring the promise: A learning-focused syllabus rubric. *To improve the academy: A journal of educational development*, 33 (1), 14-36. https://www.clemson.edu/otei/resources/syllabus-rubric-guide-2-13-171.pdf

Palmer, M.S., Wheeler, L. B., & Aneece, I. (2016). Does the document matter? The evolving role of syllabi in higher education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 48, 36-47.

Richmond, A. S., Slattery, J., Morgan, R., Mitchell, N., & Becknell, J. (2016). Can a learner-centered syllabus change students' perceptions of student-professor rapport and master teacher behaviors? *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, 2, 159-168.

Spangler, S. (2021). Syllabus Solutions: Examining Your Syllabi for Evidence of True Student-Centeredness. *Faculty Focus*. September 10. https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/course-design-ideas/syllabus-solutions-examining-your-syllabi-for-evidence-of-true-student-centeredness

Kaplan, J. (2021). How to Read a College Syllabus - And Strategize for How to Best Approach the Course. *Youtube*. Jul 6. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQ_Xmc_Urxw
*This or a similar video aimed at college students can be a resource we offer to students.

Laist, R. (2022). Prevent Student Errors with a Self-Paced Syllabus Quiz. Faculty Focus. June 24. https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/course-design-ideas/prevent-student-errors-with-a-self-paced-syllabus-quiz/ *Contains sample questions for a syllabus quiz.

Dr. Sara Fulmer shares her insights as well as several visuals on preparing a learner-centered syllabus in Weekly Digest #64: Preparing a Learning-Focused Syllabus. The visual below from her article shows simple ways to shift our language to a more learner-centered environment. (Note: this engaging visual includes full "alt text".)