Syllabus and Course Design

Presented by: Susan Geffen, Ben Lennertz and Kasia Wasilewska
Course Design
Course Design

- Start with the course objectives
Course Design

- Start with the course objectives
- Pick course materials
Course Design

- Start with the course objectives
- Pick course materials
- Create a plan for the course
Course Design

- Start with the course objectives
- Pick course materials
- Create a plan for the course
- Devise methods for assessment
Objectives

● What skills and knowledge will the students have when they leave the course?
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● Objectives may be:
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● Objectives may be:
  ○ Content based
    ■ Understand the poems of Milton
Objectives

● What skills and knowledge will the students have when they leave the course?

● Objectives may be:
  ○ Content based
    ■ Understand the poems of Milton
  ○ Skills based
    ■ Be able to interpret poetry with a special eye to the historical and social context
Objectives

● What skills and knowledge will the students have when they leave the course?

● Objectives may be motivated by:
  ○ University or departmental requirements
  ○ Needs of the students
  ○ Interests of the students and professor
Course Materials

- Find appropriate course materials that will help the students achieve the course objectives
  - Textbooks, Articles
  - Workbooks
  - Internet Resources
  - Art, Music, Film
  - etc.
Course Schedule

- Schedule the course so that students can meet the course objectives
Course Schedule

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- Plan activities with the objectives in mind
Course Schedule

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- Plan activities with the objectives in mind
- Beware of simply planning to cover the material (while being aware of the content-based goals of the course)
Assessment
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• What do you want to assess?
Assessment

● What do you want to assess?
  ○ Knowledge
  ○ Application
Assessment

● What do you want to assess?
  ○ Knowledge
  ○ Application

● How do you want to evaluate students?
Assessment

- What do you want to assess?
  - Knowledge
  - Application

- How do you want to evaluate students?
  - Exam
  - Essay
  - Project
  - Performance/portfolio
Assessment

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  ○ Knowledge
  ○ Application

● How do you want to evaluate students?
  ○ Exam
  ○ Essay
  ○ Project
  ○ Performance/portfolio

● Make sure each assignment has a purpose
What is the purpose of a syllabus?
What is the purpose of a syllabus?

- Provide a written version of course plan
What is the purpose of a syllabus?

● Provide a written version of course plan
● Define students' responsibilities
What is the purpose of a syllabus?

- Provide a written version of course plan
- Define students' responsibilities
- Define instructor's role and responsibility to students
What is the purpose of a syllabus?

- Provide a written version of course plan
- Define students' responsibilities
- Define instructor's role and responsibility to students
- Provide a clear statement of intended goals and student outcomes
What is the purpose of a syllabus?

- Establish standards and procedures for evaluation
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- Establish standards and procedures for evaluation
- Acquaint students with course logistics
What is the purpose of a syllabus?

- Establish standards and procedures for evaluation
- Acquaint students with course logistics
- Establish a pattern of communication between instructor and students

[these purposes are taken from http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/syllabi.html]
Let's look at an example
Let's look at an example

● What are the positive aspects of the syllabus?
● What are the problems with the syllabus?
● How would you change it?
Positive Aspects
Positive Aspects

• Thorough contact information for both the professor and the TA
Positive Aspects

- Thorough contact information for both the professor and the TA
- Attempt to give lots of information about the course requirements and assignments.
Positive Aspects

- Thorough contact information for both the professor and the TA
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- Academic Integrity and Disability information is complete
Positive Aspects

● Thorough contact information for both the professor and the TA
● Attempt to give lots of information about the course requirements and assignments.
● Academic Integrity and Disability information is complete
● Attempt to be concise
Problems
Problems

- Lacks a description of course content
Problems

- Lacks a description of course content
- Lacks a list of student learning goals
Problems

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- Lacks the date of the final
Problems

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- Lacks the date of the final
- Contains a huge, unreadable block of text
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- Contains an unclear schedule
Problems

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- Contains a huge, unreadable block of text
- Contains an unclear schedule
- Contains typos
Problems

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- Lacks a list of student learning goals
- Lacks the date of the final
- Contains a huge, unreadable block of text
- Contains an unclear schedule
- Contains typos
- Requires multiple textbooks which are not used
Changes
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- Include information about the course as well as the course goals.
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- Arrange all information in a way that is easy to digest - bullet points, separated short paragraphs, etc.
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- Arrange all information in a way that is easy to digest - bullet points, separated short paragraphs, etc.
- Include dates in the course schedule.
- Don't include superfluous material
Components of a syllabus:

- Heading and Administrative Matters
- Introduction and Goals
- Required texts
- Course Requirements and Grades
- Assignments
- Course and Reading Schedule
- Statement for Students with Disabilities
- Statement on Academic Integrity
Heading and Administrative Matters
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- Professor's name and contact information: email, office phone and location, office hours
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- TA's name and contact information
Heading and Administrative Matters

- Professor's name and contact information: email, office phone and location, office hours
- TA's name and contact information
- Lecture and discussion location and time
Heading and Administrative Matters

- Professor's name and contact information: email, office phone and location, office hours
- TA's name and contact information
- Lecture and discussion location and time
- Class webpage
Introduction and Goals
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● Introduction
  ○ Main topic and major issues to be discussed
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● Course Goals
  ○ These may include a deep understanding of some content and the development of particular skills
Required texts
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- List all text you intend to use.
Required texts

● List all text you intend to use.

● List ONLY the texts you intend to use.
Course Requirements and Grades
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- Course requirements
  - Attendance, Participation
  - Classroom behavior
  - Assignments
  - Exams
Course Requirements and Grades

● Course requirements
  ○ Attendance, Participation
  ○ Classroom behavior
  ○ Assignments
  ○ Exams

● Grade distribution
  ○ Breakdown how much exams, assignments, and other graded activities are worth
  ○ Depends on objectives
  ○ Is there a curve?
Assignments
Assignments

- List and give information about all assignments
- What is the assignment policy? extensions, make-up exams?
- Will there be extra credit?
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Exams

- Are they multiple-choice, essay, etc.?
- Is there partial credit?
- Are they cumulative?
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Provide info for
- Papers
- Presentations
- Reading responses
- Quizzes
- Extra credit
Course and Reading Schedule
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- Provide specific dates (for assignments, exams, holidays, etc)
Course and Reading Schedule

● Provide specific dates (for assignments, exams, holidays, etc)

● Be clear about what is required versus optional reading
Course and Reading Schedule

- Provide specific dates (for assignments, exams, holidays, etc)
- Be clear about what is required versus optional reading
- Include information about exam locations and times
Statement for Students with Disabilities
Statement of Academic Integrity

- University specific
- Can usually be found on the school website
Modifying existing syllabi / courses
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● Are your goals the same or different?
Modifying existing syllabi / courses

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- Are the previously covered topics relevant to your objectives?
Modifying existing syllabi / courses

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- Are the previously covered topics relevant to your objectives?
- Are materials (textbooks, videos, etc) still relevant or has new information emerged?
Modifying existing syllabi / courses

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- Are the previously covered topics relevant to your objectives?
- Are materials (textbooks, videos, etc) still relevant or has new information emerged?
- Who is your audience (e.g. graduate students, undergraduates, majors, non-majors etc.)?
Avoiding Common Pitfalls
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● Don't make major changes to the syllabus - eg. exam dates, grade distribution - once the semester has started
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● Don't use tiny font because you need to squeeze into 5 pages
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● Don't make typos or use improper grammar (Proofread!)
Some student feedback.
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- resources for extra help?
Some student feedback.

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● specify what kinds of aids the students can use during exams; open book? calculator? cheat sheet?
● if possible post all of the semester's assignments with due dates at the beginning of the year
● resources for extra help?
● add some color?
Syllabi should be neat, short, to the point and easy to read.
Resources / References

Center for Excellence in Teaching:

● Course Design:
  http://cet.usc.edu/resources/teaching_learning/course.html

● Syllabus Design:
  http://cet.usc.edu/resources/teaching_learning/syllabus.html

USC Curriculum Coordination Office:

● Syllabus Suggestions:
  http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/curriculum/syllabus_suggestions.html

● Syllabus Template:
  http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/private/Syllabus_Template_CCO.doc
Thank you.