



TO: All Full-time and Part-time Faculty

FROM: The Office of Instruction

RE: **Fall 2012 First Day Handout – Course Syllabus**

Welcome to “Writing a Course Syllabus 101”! Below is a suggested template for content to be included in your syllabus. The syllabus should be professional in appearance yet it should be as student-friendly as possible. An electronic copy of your syllabus should be submitted to sschmidt@losmedanos.edu in the Office of Instruction by the first day of your class.

OUTLINE FOR THE SYLLABUS

Tone

- The tone should be respectful, encouraging, and welcoming to students
- Tone communicates a helpful, positive attitude
- Tone is motivational and non-threatening

Communication of High Expectations

- All students are expected and encouraged to succeed in the course
- Belief that all students are capable of obtaining their educational goal
- Descriptions that empower all students to believe they can meet and excel at the course goals and objectives
- All students are expected to actively participate in classroom discussions and rigorous learning activities
- All students and faculty are to be highly respectful of each other

Course Information

- Title and course number
- Department name
- Number of units
- Semester (fall, spring, or summer)
- Meeting time and location
- Materials fee (if applicable)

Instructor Information

- Name of instructor
- Office address and phone extension
- Email address
- Student hours (formerly office hours) – list all 5 weekly hours (some can be scheduled in the CORE)
- Preferred method of communication (phone versus email versus other)

Bibliography

- Required texts and articles
- Recommended texts and articles
- Readings (including optional) and other preparations for each class meeting
- Other course-related materials (if any)
- Where to locate or purchase texts and materials – availability in the library or the reserve section

Course Calendar or Schedule

- Sequence of course topics with tentative (or firm) dates
- Due dates for and nature of assignments, exams
- Calendar of class activities

Grading/Evaluation Methods

- Grading procedures for assignments and exams
- Procedure for determining final grade
- Components of final grade
- Weighting of components
- Attendance alone cannot be a factor in grading; however, if participation is included in grading, clearly explain how it will be assessed.
- Indicate if the course is 'student choice' with a brief explanation that it is irreversible.

Course Policies

- College-based policies (such as academic dishonesty, expected behavior, etc)
Legal opinion states that a failing grade can be assigned to a particular exam or assignment (not the course) in the case of academic dishonesty. The Student Code of Conduct that defines misconduct and describes disciplinary procedures is on the college website at: <http://www.losmedanos.edu/studentcodeofconduct/>

- Departmental policies
- Course-specific policies (attendance, dropping the class, missed exams, makeup work, collaborative work, use of technology, electronic/social media, etc.)
- Statement on ADA accommodations: *Students with documented learning and/or physical disabilities may receive reasonable classroom and/or testing accommodations. Please make these arrangements with the instructor at the beginning of the semester or as soon as possible after documentation has been determined. Last minute requests may not be determined to be “reasonable.”*
- If you need additional information on ADA issues, please contact DSPS department at ext. 3353.
- All students must be enrolled – the college does not permit sitting in or auditing. All students must enroll prior to the deadline for late enrollment

Classroom conduct and student expectations

- Regular and timely attendance
- No food or drinks in computer labs
- Children and non-enrolled persons are not allowed to ‘sit in’ in the class
- Create a respectful learning environment for all students in the class

Consideration of Students’ Needs, Aspirations and Resources

- Development of students’ study skills and critical thinking abilities
- Location of additional resources: Labs, Center for Academic Support, tutoring, counseling, study skills courses, library, and other support services
- Description of how class and course objectives will prepare students for future courses and/or academic goals and careers
- Transfer information as applicable. LMC’s Academic Senate has asked faculty to include detailed information on the transferability of courses (CSU/UC/IGETC, area/requirement fulfilled, etc.) Please encourage students to see a counselor to develop an educational plan and/or for detailed transfer information
- Description of type of support students could receive in preparation for tests and papers
- If the course has “Hours by Arrangement” the syllabus must include the specific times and instructional activities. Participation is mandatory and must be factored into the grade
- Provide students the link to the class cancellation notice on main LMC webpage. Here is the link: <http://www.losmedanos.edu/classcancel/>

Introduction to the Course

- Overview of course material
- Connection to overall program. Transfer information.

Course/Instructor Philosophy

- Philosophy on teaching and learning
- Conceptual structure used to organize the course and why it is organized so

Prerequisites

- What classes they should already have had or what they should know to succeed
- What they should do if they don't meet the prerequisites

Student Learning Outcomes – Required for every syllabus

- What knowledge students should demonstrate at the end of the course
- What skills students should demonstrate at the end of the course
- The outcomes will be assessed (evaluated) by the instructor in order to improve the teaching/learning process

Teaching and Learning Strategies

- Format of class
- Required activities: wide-variety of instructional techniques and resources
- Recommended activities; expectation of active participation by all students
- Suggested learning strategies

Connection to Student's Cultural and Historical Backgrounds

- Statement on the valuing of diversity
- Choose texts and materials that reflect a variety of cultural experiences
- Relevance of course to student's socio-cultural realities

Once you have written the syllabus, share it with others for feedback as to its clarity, completeness, and tone.

Once class begins, how do you best use your new syllabus?

While there is no one particular rule to follow, there are a few suggestions that have been collected from instructors who use syllabi successfully.

- *Hand out the syllabus on the first day of class.* When you do this you set the tone for the course. The syllabus lets students know that you have completed your preparation and intend to present an organized course.
- *Review and discuss the syllabus with your students.* Be prepared to answer questions about your testing and grading policies, and other matters of concern to students. Discussions on topics such as classroom behavior may be valuable.
- *Duplicate more copies than you have students.* Be prepared to replace lost syllabi, and have copies made for students enrolling late.
- *Put a copy of the syllabus on the course website.* Take advantage of the web and provide hyperlinks to resources to which the syllabus refers. Send an electronic copy to the Office of Instruction.
- *Print the syllabus in bright, colored paper.* Students will be able to find it easily during the semester.