

# Learning-Centered Syllabi: Opportunities to Engage Students

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*“A learning-centered approach to college education asks you to consider how each and every aspect of your course can most effectively support student learning. How, then, can you use your syllabus to promote your students’ engagement with subject matter and their intellectual development?”* p.3. Grunert, J. 1997. ***The Course Syllabus: A learning-centered approach.*** Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company.

## **SHIFT THE FOCUS**

- Does your syllabus indicate that all of the decisions about the course have already been made?
- When the teacher decides everything, how does that affect the motivation to learn?
- Does teacher decision-making help students develop as independent learners?

## **MIND THE TONE**

- How would you characterize the tone of your syllabus?
- What implicit messages are communicated in your syllabi?
- How has your syllabus evolved as you’ve grown as a teacher?

## **CONSTRUCT COLLABORATIVELY**

- What topics or areas are of greatest interest to us as a class?
- What are your goals, expectations, and learning needs for this course?
- How can we best connect our readings and discussions to our everyday lives?
- How can we engage with multiple learning styles throughout the semester?

## **REVISIT REGULARLY**

- How often do you refer to the syllabus during the term?
- Have you ever asked students for feedback on your syllabus?
- What process, if any, do you use to regularly & systematically review and reflect on your syllabus?

## **SESSION NOTES:**

## Current Policies

**Attendance.** It's my hope that you'll find class time an interesting and valuable part of your learning in the course. Typically, class time will be dedicated to problem solving, Q&A, and discussion. An important way to set a good foundation for learning is by attending class regularly.

**Homework Assignments** are due by 9AM of the due date. Please submit to the drop-box by the assigned deadline AND... bring a copy of your homework to class. Late work isn't accepted since we'll be reviewing the assignments during class. Assignments are evaluated on the basis of a "good-faith-effort" (GFE). Earning 90%+ homework grade results in 100% as homework grade. Percentages below 90% receive the percentage earned, e.g. 87% completion is 87% grade.

*\*\*Completing the assignments on time and bringing a hard copy to class is an important learning activity in this course.\*\**

**Calculators.** This course involves some computations. Please bring a calculator to class. Cell phone calculators may not be used during exams. Believe it or not... multiplication, and even long division can be done on paper ☺ so if you forget your calculator, you'll still be able to complete the exams... it just might take a bit longer.

**Electronic Devices.** In order to facilitate a positive learning environment please set your phone to silent mode and put it away. It's distracting to me, and to other students if you are texting, or emailing, or on Facebook, etc. during class. I'll do my best to make class time engaging, to minimize the temptation of those distractions. Let's respect the learning environment and each other.

**Makeup Exams.** Makeup exams are only given under exceptional circumstances.

## Engagement & Learning Activities

**Open-notes Quizzes.** Occasionally, there will be a very short, 1-2 questions, no more than 5-minutes, quiz. They will be based on one of the following: screencast video content, a HW question, or material from the current day's lesson and activities.

**Online Discussion.** Throughout the semester, questions for debate/discussion will be posted on ANGEL. The class will be organized in random, mixed groups to allow different folks to consider questions about hiring/firing decisions, setting employee salaries, fraud and internal control, and other relevant topics. Groups with high-quality discussions will receive ***extra-credit as a group*** since a discussion is not just one or two people making a statement with several others saying "Yes, I agree." A discussion is based on give and take, polite debate, considering other perspectives, agreeing to disagree, or sometimes changing your view in response to persuasive comments.

**In-class Activities & Assessments.** There will be routine opportunities to complete in-class problems alone, in pairs, or small groups. Occasionally these will be collected and reviewed for extra-credit.

**Office Hour Visit.** Bring a short list of questions, or a specific problem or two you've attempted and would like to review one-on-one during office hours. Then, submit a brief summary of what you learned during the visit.

**Learning Center Tutoring.** Attend a tutoring session and submit a brief summary about what was reviewed/discussed during the session.

**Contribution to Learning.** A significant oral contribution such as: a thoughtful question, a comment that follows up on something another student said or asked will be rewarded periodically.

**Silent Slips.** Thoughtful, non-verbal communication on a slip of paper given to the instructor. I'll share these ideas and questions anonymously, unless otherwise agreed, allowing folks a non-verbal way to share their ideas.

**Educational Email.** Sometimes a student asks a really great question, or makes an important observation via email. This may also be rewarded.

**Student-initiated Engagement.** Since learning is personal... please share with me your ideas, and we'll discuss adding it to the list!