

Course Syllabus Format

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

I. Introduction

The Faculty Handbook states that "The teacher or teachers of each course is/are responsible for developing and keeping up-to-date a syllabus which conforms to the Sam Houston State University catalogue description and the adopted textbook. A carefully planned syllabus is particularly important for multi-section courses involving several instructors."

A syllabus is regarded as a document that holds both students and professors accountable. More than just an outline of the course, a syllabus establishes the respective obligations and rights of the student and professor. A clear and specific syllabus promotes the educational process and helps to avoid disagreements and grievances. To this end, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences requires that each faculty member provide students with a syllabus that contains the components outlined below. **Those items below marked with an asterisk (*) are required for the syllabus.**

Beginning in fall, 2007, the syllabus for each course must be made available in the department office and through the department's webpage. Faculty members are encouraged to place their syllabi on Blackboard.

II. Elements of the Syllabus

The syllabus should contain each of the following:

- *1. Heading, which includes each of the following elements at the top of the first page:**
 - a. COURSE NUMBER
 - b. COURSE TITLE
 - c. CREDIT HOURS
 - d. SEMESTER, YEAR
- *2. Location of Class Meeting**
- *3. Class Meeting Times**
- *4. Instructor**
- *5. Office Location**
- *6. Instructor Contact Information** (Office telephone number, e-mail Address, FAX number and/or other contact information)
- *7. Office Hours** (List times and days)
According to the Faculty Handbook "Faculty members are expected to post outside of their offices ... office hours and conference periods most

advantageous to students." Normally it is expected that a minimum of one hour of office time per day should be kept on an announced schedule and faculty should be available for student conferences at other times by appointment.

***8. Course Description** (The following elements)

- Paragraph description which reflects the catalogue's description
- A list of prerequisite course(s)
- Brief overview of approach/method of instruction (indicating lecture, lecture/lab, group discussion, types of exams, projects, homework, etc.)

***9. Course Objectives**

This section provides a bullet-type list of the course objectives that will give students a clear idea of what they will be expected to learn or accomplish. The list of objectives must reflect the course and catalogue description. It is suggested that the syllabus objectives be related to those used with the IDEA evaluation system.

***10. Required Textbook(s) and/or Reference(s)/Reading List**

A complete citation of each required textbook or reference book should be included on the syllabus. Textbooks are required for lower level courses. Students should be notified that it is their responsibility to obtain course materials at the beginning of the semester.

***11. Attendance Policy**

Describe attendance policy in precise terms. The policy must be, at minimum, compatible with the university policy stated in the Faculty Handbook (see Academic Policy Statement 800401). Beyond the stated guideline, each instructor may use his/her discretion as long as the policy is outlined in specific terms.

***12. Exams**

Describe how many exams will be given and what format will be used. The instructor's policy on missed exams and make-up exams should be described clearly (and it must be applied evenly).

***13. Grading Plan**

Describe in precise terms how the final course grade will be calculated and the grading scale that will be used. Describe the instructor's extra credit policy (extra credit is discouraged). The policies regarding grade posting, re-grading, etc., should also be included in this section. **Faculty members must provide students with course feedback and grades, prior to the semester drop date. Grades on all materials contributing to final course grades must be returned or made available to students.**

(Note: The next four sections are covered on the SHSU webpage at: <https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/> .)

***14. Academic Dishonesty**

Include an academic dishonesty statement policy that is, at minimum, compatible with Academic Policy Statement 810213 and the Faculty Handbook. Suggested wording for such a policy is provided in italics below:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

It is suggested that the actions that constitute cheating or academic dishonesty for the course be specifically defined so that there are no real or alleged misunderstandings. Describe penalties that will apply.

Courses requiring the submission of written materials or oral presentations should have a clear statement of the nature of plagiarism and the penalties it incurs.

***15. Americans with Disabilities Act**

Inform students that requests for accommodations must be initiated by the student. A student seeking accommodations should go to the Counseling Center for certification of the disability in a timely manner. A sample paragraph to include in the syllabus is given below:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for

students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

***16. Religious Holidays**

The statement below would be appropriate to include in the instructor's syllabus:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

17. Visitors in the Classroom

According to the Faculty Handbook a statement regarding the instructor's policy on classroom visitors should be included on the syllabus. The following statement (in italics below) is recommended.

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

This policy is not intended to discourage the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.

***18. Instructor Evaluations**

Inform students that they will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

***19. Assignments**

Assignments, projects, papers, etc. must be described in detail either in the syllabus or elsewhere available to the students to inform the students of the specifics of each assignment. For each required activity, the specific criteria for evaluation should be stated. For examples, the description should include the grading system to be used, the type of citation required for each research paper, etc. This information should be retained for two years.

***20. Required Supplies**

A list of all supplies that a student must purchase to successfully complete the course should be included with sufficient detail to prevent inadequate purchases. This section may be omitted if supplies are not required.

21. Study Tips

Suggestions for success and study tips may be included. A notice concerning the availability of the SAM Center for students with academic difficulty could be posted here.

22. Course Outline

The inclusion of a course outline is suggested. However, if one is included on the Syllabus, the instructor should consider language that notifies students that the course outline or schedule is tentative and may be subject to revision. Labeling outline as tentative avoids the risk of complaint if later revisions are made. Note: It is always easier to delete items from the syllabus than to add new ones.

***23. Classroom Rules of Conduct**

The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline is found at the following link:

<https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>.

Section 5.2.22 defines classroom disturbances. The syllabus should spell out the policies in regard to cell phones and other typical disturbances.

24. Optional Texts, References or Supplies

Describe any optional course materials that will improve a student's ability to perform well in the course. This section may be omitted at the instructor's discretion

III. Laboratories, Studios, and Individual Instruction

A. Laboratory and Studio Sections

Laboratory, studio, and individual instruction courses must be accompanied by a syllabus that includes the same types of information required for a lecture

section. Descriptions and requirements for laboratory or studio sections offered as extensions of a course and taught by the same instructor as the lecture section may be included in the syllabus for the lecture section to avoid duplication. A common syllabus can be developed for laboratories and studios in cases where there are multiple sections. In such cases, the syllabus must contain the information listed above marked by an asterisk.

B. Individual Instruction

Courses offered as individual instruction must have a complete syllabus. The instructor of such courses is required to provide students with Individual Instruction Contracts. The contract must include a complete description of the requirements of the course such as assignment descriptions, assignment deadlines, the basis for grades, the schedule of regular meetings, and other elements of a syllabus that are deemed essential. Both the instructor and the student must sign one copy of this contract and submit it to the departmental Chair as a matter of record.

IV. Combined Graduate/Undergraduate Classes

A. Syllabus Requirements

For classes containing both undergraduate and graduate students, the syllabus should contain clear descriptions of the increased standards for graduate students as compared to undergraduate students. These higher standards for graduate students should involve knowledge of literature, an increased expectation of independent research, and a more demanding grading scale.