

Courtesy Photos

What's In Your Syllabus?

FLORIDA A&M & WEBSTER UNIVERSITY - Samuel L. Jackson, a well know African American actor, has been the pitch man for a popular credit card in which he explains the differences between other credit cards and the one he suggests we should have. Afterwards he ends with the catchphrase, "What's in your Wallet?"

This is not an attempt to advertise for the card mentioned above, but it brings into context an important aspect of academic success for many students as they enter a college classroom. The syllabus serves several important purposes: first off it communicates the instructor's course design and course information, it also defines expectations and responsibilities. There are other pieces of information that should be included in the course syllabus, yet those are not included. What's in your syllabus can prepare your students for academic success.



Errick D. Farmer, Ph.D.

Defined attendance policies permits students to obtain knowledge not contained in the text book

So, let's discuss some basic information of what should be included in your syllabus:

Office Hours: It's very important to list your true office hours for your students. List a time that's convenient for them and not you as a professor. In addition, provide enough time to meet, instead of the 30 minutes here and there. Many students are traveling back from

another class, so please allow for ample meeting time. If it permits, allow students to make an appointment to meet with you. If this is done, make sure the appointment

is kept.



Adriel A. Hilton, Ph.D.

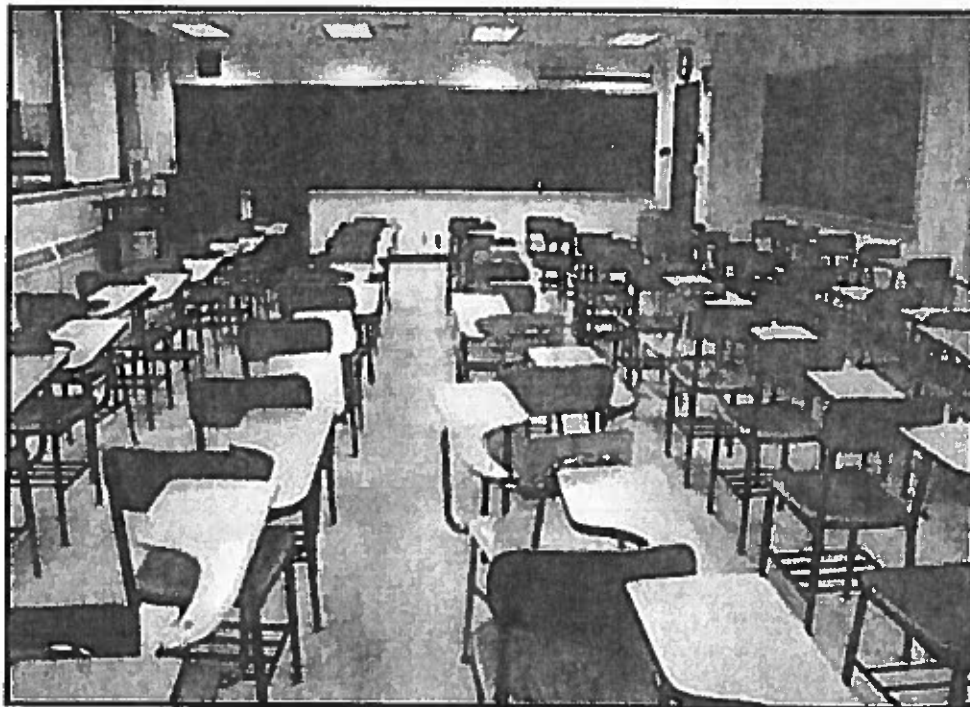
Course Objective: Your course objectives should not be vague; your objectives should be clear and concise statements that describe what you plan what your students should be learning by the end of the course. The course objective also should provide clear reasons for teaching. When writing your course objectives describe the intended result of instruction rather than the process of instruction itself.

Course Level Student Learning Outcomes: What do your students need to know? Student Learning Outcomes or SLOs are statements that specify what

students will know, be able to do or be able to demonstrate when they have completed or participated in a program/activity/course/projects. Outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills, attitudes or values. It is important for these SLOs to be specific and relatively easy to measure. Action verbs result in overt behavior that can be observed and measured.

Teaching & Learning Philosophy Statement: As a professor or instructor, do you have a teaching and learning philosophy statement? How would you describe your teaching philosophy? According to Maryellen Weimer, author of *Keeping Teaching Philosophy and Instructional Practice on the Same Page*, conscientious pedagogical reflection is necessary to produce complete, well-developed teaching philosophy. The absence of pedagogical reflection can result in daily instruction that fails to reflect an instructor's teaching philosophy or instructional belief system accurately. While each statement will look different, there are basic elements that each should include. Your statement should include your conception of teaching and learning, a description of how you teach. In addition, in a report by B. Jean Mandernach, your statement should also include the student's responsibility to their learning experience during the course as well as the teaching methods and approach the professor will use to help students successfully progress through the course. This is most important because it describes what students will expect from the professor. At the end of each semester, reflect upon your teaching and learning philosophy statement and determine what changes are needed for your students to be successful.

Course Requirements: What is absolutely needed to be successful in your class? Is it a book or a subscription? Often times students are not successful



Often times students are not successful because they do not know the requirements needed for the course.

because they do not know the requirements needed for the course. It is imperative that professors determine the essential requirements for the course and make sure they are clearly listed on the course syllabus.

Attendance Policy: Is your attendance policy clearly stated? Many college instructors exhort their students to attend class as frequently as possible, arguing that high levels of class attendance are likely to increase learning and improve student grades. Attending class not only permits students to obtain information that is not contained in textbooks or lecture materials

presented online, but also allows students varied contact with material; including lectures, review of notes, and demonstrations. However, while it may be difficult and time consuming for attendance to be taken in many large introductory classes, a statement concerning attendance is needed.

This is not an all exhaustive list of all the items required for student success. You should, however, make sure you include as much useful information in your syllabus as possible. After all, it's "What's in your Syllabus" which defines student success. ☞

References

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