
2026-2027 SYLLABUS GUIDE



This syllabus guide presents suggestions in the flow of a typical syllabus, with a focus on creating transparency and high structure as well as ways that you can be welcoming and supportive of all students. The guide reflects recent changes at Clemson:

1. Build your syllabus in [Simple Syllabus](#), an app embedded in your Canvas site, with key policies are updated and preloaded by the deans.
2. A short [Instructors Guide](#) from Clemson Online is located in the Box drive.
3. Explore Clemson syllabi with your Clemson login, in the library feature of [Clemson's Simple Syllabus](#).
4. Canvas has accessibility checker features that help you build more accessible materials.
5. For questions on Simple Syllabus or Canvas accessibility, please enter an IT Help ticket or contact [Clemson Online](#) directly.

Suggestions included below can help you create a student-centered syllabus, one that appeals to students and directs their learning in a productive way. These suggestions are based on research, highlighting some top evidence-based practices, and created by OTEI with input from campus leaders. You may also access other syllabus guides in our [Teaching Guides](#) page, providing you with further ideas to build both a student-centered syllabus and Canvas home page.

What to Do with This Template

- Open Simple Syllabus
- Use any of the suggestions below in writable blocks in Simple Syllabus
- Add blocks using "add" button on the left or the "+" sign at the bottom of the page. New additions appear at the bottom.
- "Blocks" of information can be moved up or down using the "reorder" button on the left and then "closed" once you are done.
- You may decide that a suggestion below is more appropriate on the Canvas Home page for your course!

Create a student-centered syllabus in Simple Syllabus

- Use welcoming & encouraging language
- Present information in more than one way—including graphics or images (marked with “Alt Text” of course!)
- Clarify educational and/or disciplinary “jargon”
- Offer resources on learning—these can also be added to the Canvas Home Page
- Be transparent on requirements, due dates, and other expectations

Your syllabus is often the **first impression** students have of you and your course. Think about how you can create a sense of wonder for your students. Use your syllabus to share what drew you to the field and the types of questions that you hope will inspire and challenge students throughout the course.

Further instructor resources are at the bottom of this document, including a **workload estimator and a dates generator**.

SIMPLE SYLLABUS SUGGESTIONS AND INFORMATION

INSTRUCTOR NAME:

[Required] Autoloaded but check carefully! As applicable, include information for multiple instructors or teaching assistants. Name, email, phone, office, office hours are required for all people responsible for teaching the course section.

Option: Add your photo (with “alt text”) for a more inclusive and accessible syllabus! You can even include pronunciation advice. Use the “pencil” edit symbol beside your name.

In this example in Simple Syllabus, Dr. Hoffman provides a friendly avatar, and several options for how to reach her during office hours. (Used with permission.)



Dr. Jessie Hoffman
Email: jhoffm8@clermson.edu
Title: Co-Director of the Social Media Listening Center, Lecturer
Office Hours:
Tuesday/Thursday: 10:00 A.M - 12:00 P.M. (in office),
Friday 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. (Zoom) , and by appointment

Instructor Email:

[Required] Consider indicating how quickly students can expect a response to their inquiries.

Feel free to adopt/adapt the following statement as an optional addition: I do my best to respond to email inquiries within 24 hours, excluding weekends and university holidays.

If you respond more quickly to text, you can add a cell phone or app contact (like Discord, MS Teams, Slack, etc.). Be sure to let students know this method will likely be answered sooner than email and/or that it is your preferred method. *Note: Teams and Slack are used officially by the university. Other apps may not appropriately follow FERPA guidelines. Contact CCIT for more information.

Student Hours:

[Required] Office hours. These include virtual locations (Zoom, Google Hangout, etc.) as well as physical spaces. Holding some online hours helps students with choices to access you for help. Simple Syllabus employs the term “Office Hours,” but you can add the language of “Student Hours” (a popular alternate term) with a note of explanation if you wish.



Hint: The new approach, to be more “friendly” and clear with students, is to rename office hours as student hours. You can frame this time as opportunities to get to know your students better. For example, instead of saying “My office hours are X”, you could state, “During my scheduled student hours, I look forward to the opportunity to discuss course concepts, assignments, or any other items that you would like to talk about. I design this time to get to know you and welcome you to join me for casual conversations about the course and college success generally.”

Course Description

[Required] Insert the **current catalog description** in this box. This cannot be preloaded by Simple Syllabus, so you need to copy and paste from the catalog. Since students sign up using the catalogue information, not only is the required but also useful for your own alignment. List any prerequisites for your course here or state there are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Information

In this **required** block, you can add a more specific description that is unique to your course section, e.g. “In this section, we will...” You may also add items such as major goals for the course or modality information (“we will meet occasionally through Zoom as needed, or use Zoom by permission, if you are sick).

You can also provide a brief sketch of the course goals and the course arc. This is an area where you can personalize the approach to this course (your motivations, intentions, etc.) This is also an area where you can help evoke wonder in your students.

*Hint: For example, “The goal for this course is that **we** will learn...” or “This (topic) is crucial to developing a better world (more detail here of course).” “By the end of the course we will understand and be able to present (details on the concluding project and goals).”*

Take advantage of this section and use student-centered, welcoming language to share what makes your course great. This section moves beyond the course catalog description and really highlights the key topics in the course.

Value Statement

Add a block in which you provide a statement about the value of the course for students, for a more student-centered approach! How do you usually explain the value of this course? You might consider answering questions such as, how is this useful and relevant to students? How does it help them achieve their goals? This statement provides students with a rationale that is positive and inspiring. Just like the Course Information block, a Value Statement can help students see the relevance of the course. Even if it is a required course, students hear you explain why it is important and how they will benefit from taking the course.

Course Learning Objectives

[Required] but you may need to add this block

- List your COURSE objectives/outcomes here. These are [short statements using action words](#) such as describe, examine, recognize, construct, develop, analyze, correlate, evaluate, predict, create, design, etc., based on Bloom’s cognitive taxonomy. They often start with the phrase, “After completing this course, you will be able to:”
- DEPARTMENT / PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES: Many programs ask certain classes to include sets of programmatic outcomes. Check with your department chair.
- GENERAL EDUCATION, “Crossings”, STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: If the course you are teaching is part of the General Education curriculum, the syllabus must include the specific General Education student learning outcome(s), as stated in [the current Undergraduate Catalog](#).

Ensure that your objectives are measurable and that your course assignments should align with these outcomes. For assistance with writing learning outcomes, contact OTEI and visit OTEI's [guides on course design](#) or [schedule a consultation](#) for support.

Required Materials

[Required, per federal policy] The titles of all textbooks and whether they are required or recommended must be submitted in advance to the [campus bookstore website](#). If no purchased text is assigned, indicate that in the form. (Instructors are required to submit the information to the bookstore.)

For visual recognition cues, add images (with “alt text”) of books.

Consider Open Education Resources (OER) that are free for students and represent diverse content. Check out [Open Education information and resources from Clemson Libraries](#).

Learning Environment

Add a block that sets the tone for the type of learning environment you want to create for you and your students. It can include information such as:

1. Class environment (methods of instruction, role of the student, role of the faculty member—such as expectations you can have of each other, like being on time)
2. Types of collaboration they can expect, incorporation of peer-to-peer teaching and learning, uses of demonstration for tools and projects, types of activities or performance tasks they can expect in labs or lectures

Hint: This is an opportunity to really set the stage for an inclusive learning environment. Reframe how you approach these topics, avoid negative (must) language, and use positive language such as:

- Participation provides unique opportunities to learn from your peers and myself. Therefore, attendance in class is important. Your voice is key to this course.*
- The course exams are scheduled and in your course outline. In fairness to all students, please make sure you have these dates/times noted in your calendar. If you have to miss an exam, it is critical that you communicate with me as soon as possible to let me know. Make-up exams will be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

How to Be Successful in this Course

This added section could include several general guidelines, e.g., estimated amount of time to spend on preparation, assignments, participation in class discussion, use of supplemental teaching materials, to more sophisticated rubrics related to student performance on various evaluation measures (e.g., exams, assignments, projects).

You can also add a table or list of the shared responsibilities and even discuss and amend, with students, in class!

Syllabus statement example:

Your Responsibility as a Student

- Be prepared for all classes
- Be respectful of others
- Actively contribute to the learning activities in class
- Abide by the University Academic Integrity Policy

My Responsibility as an Instructor

- Be prepared for all classes
- Evaluate all fairly and equally
- Be respectful of all students
- Create and facilitate meaningful learning activities
- Behave according to university codes of conduct

Your Well-being is Important



Student Well-being resources are now located with a heart symbol in the general table of contents in Canvas (left side). You can point this out to students on the first day. You can also add your own statement encouraging well-being and mental health.

A Clemson Faculty member created this example statement, used with permission:

“As a student you may experience a range of personal issues that can impede learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug concerns, feeling down, sadness, difficulty concentrating, lack of motivation, or other issues. These mental health concerns may impact your academic performance or your participation in daily activities. It is very important that you ask for help when you are struggling. Please reach out to me or to Clemson’s [mental health services](#) to guide you to resources that will help.”

Topical Outline / Schedule

[Required] This can be a list of topics from the textbook (if applicable) or a list of course content topics, dates for each topic, and objectives. **You can emphasize transparency and high structure aligned with your Canvas modules by adding columns for student learning objectives and assessments related to each topic** (example below).

Topic / Module	Learning Outcomes	Assessments

Course Grading Scheme and Grading Policies

In this box, you may include the following (or add additional boxes)

- **Major Assessment/Grading Activities**

[Required] Your assessment instructions provide students with a rationale and, whenever possible, with an *authentic (meaningful and real) task*. Pace and scaffold your assignments (i.e., the tasks to completing assessments are transparently clear to students and build on each other) throughout the course, and at least one is scheduled early in the semester—all of which supports effective student learning.

Including the weight for each exam (including the final exam), paper, report, discussion, participation, or other assessment activity **is required** in the syllabus.

For undergraduate courses that also offer 6000 level graduate credit, clearly indicate the additional requirements for graduate students **as required** in Clemson academic policy.

The following table may be useful to add to your syllabus:

Major Assessment Activities

Assessment	Weight/Points	Due Date	Short Description	Link to Learning Outcome(s)
Required: list major assignments, due dates and weight,				

including the final exam.				

Hint: Create Canvas assignments and use the Gradebook so students can see expectations and grading criteria and have due dates integrated into their Canvas calendars. Using all these Canvas features creates a more inclusive, accessible course for your students.

- **Course Feedback**

Giving students feedback is considered one of the TOP 10 methods of effective student learning. Feedback can be both formative (informal, non-graded) and summative (graded). In this section of your syllabus, add an overview of your feedback techniques. For ideas on feedback, see the [OTEL teaching guides on assessment resources](#). Examples include online or paper surveys called Classroom Assessment Techniques.

*Sample syllabus language:
Included below is a brief overview of all methods I will use to gather your feedback regarding the course, including formative (informal) feedback tools:
(List feedback methods here!)*

In the Canvas Commons, we include survey tools you can import to use in your course, including feedback surveys. Navigate the Canvas menu to find the Commons and search #OTEL.

- **Grading System**

[Required] Provide your students with grading information. The following table may be useful to you for your syllabus, as you provide the point ranges/percentages associated with each letter grade.

Letter	Points/Percentages
A	
B	
C	
D	
F	

You may give grades of A, B, C, D, F, I, P, NP and W, in accordance with academic regulations. For more information on this grading system and what each grade means, please see *the “Grading System” section of the Undergraduate Catalog*.

- **Grading Policies**

[Required] Outline your grading policies, including whether you round up or not, the anticipated turnaround time on graded work, etc. Consult the Deans’ class regulations letters on fair grading procedures and approach your department /college for more information. [The OTEL website](#) also has resources available.

Late Work

Include your late work policy. Be very specific about whether you accept late work and any penalties that students might accrue for turning work in past the due date.

Hint: Approach grading and late work policies with a pedagogy of kindness. Recognize that students have multiple things that need their attention and/or that life happens. Have policies that offer flexibility when possible.

AI Statement

[Required] Uses of AI fall under university policy recommendations. Currently, unauthorized uses of AI are treated as potential plagiarism cases (see Academic Integrity below). Per the Faculty Senate, instructors must include an AI statement of some kind in the syllabus, to explain their approach to the use of AI in your course. Consult this OTEI [guide on how to write an AI statement](#), with four sample statements; this help sheet is also linked in Simple Syllabus for you to access. Reviewed by the Division of Undergraduate Learning and the Graduate School as compatible with the university's policies on academic integrity.

Need further direction for graduate-level use of AI in teaching and research? See [this statement from the Graduate School](#).

(Documents are located on our [Clemson Resources](#) page along with other AI resource links.)

Absences

[Required] As per Clemson academic policy, course instructors may use *reasonable* academic penalties which reflect the importance of work missed due to unexcused absences, since absence from class is detrimental to the learning process. Course instructors who penalize students for unexcused absences must state attendance requirements as related to the grading, on the course syllabus and keep accurate attendance records. See the Academic Regulations section of the current Undergraduate catalog or the Policies and Procedures of the Graduate catalog, both located at the [Course Catalog home page](#).

Notification of Absence

The **Notification of Absence module in Canvas** allows students to quickly notify instructors (via an email) of an absence from class and provides for the following categories: court attendance, death of immediate family member, illness, illness of family member, injury, military duty, religious observance, scheduled surgery, university function, unscheduled hospitalization, other anticipated absence, or other unanticipated absence.

The notification form requires a brief explanation, dates and times. Based on the dates and times indicated, instructors are automatically selected, but students may decide which instructors will receive the notification. This does not serve as an “excuse” from class. It is a request for an excused absence and students are encouraged to discuss the absence with instructors, as the instructor is the only person who can excuse an absence. If students are unable to report the absence by computer, they may reach the Office of Advocacy and Success. Students with excessive absences who need academic or medical assistance can also contact the Office of Advocacy and Success.

Inclement Weather or Emergency

Regularly scheduled exams and assignments may need to be adjusted based on unforeseen circumstances. The Faculty Senate Scholastic Policies Committee suggests the following policy, which you may copy into your syllabus:

Any exam that was scheduled at the time of a class cancellation due to inclement weather will be given at the next class meeting unless I contact you otherwise. Any assignments due at the time of a class cancellation due to inclement weather will be due at the next class meeting unless I contact you. And any extension or postponement of assignments or exams must be granted by me via email or Canvas within 24 hours of the weather-related cancellation.

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

Tools

Date Generator: McDonald, C. Rice University. Note: you may get an error as this is an http: not an https: page.

Workload Estimator: Wake Forest Center for Advancement of Teaching.

Open Syllabus Explorer: An international research site with searchable syllabi and informative blog.

Syllabus Guide, Reflection Sheet, and a Quick Guide to Using Bloom's Taxonomy are all on our Teaching Resources [Syllabus and Course Design page](#) (OTEI)

Selected References

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*This or a similar video aimed at college students can be a resource we offer to students.
- Laist, R. (2022). Prevent Student Errors with a Self-Paced Syllabus Quiz. *Faculty Focus*. June 24.
<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/course-design-ideas/prevent-student-errors-with-a-self-paced-syllabus-quiz/> *Contains sample questions for a syllabus quiz.
- Dr. Sara Fulmer shares her insights as well as several visuals on preparing a learner-centered syllabus in [Weekly Digest #64: Preparing a Learning-Focused Syllabus](#). The visual below from her article shows simple ways to shift our language to a more learner-centered environment. (Note: this engaging visual includes full "alt text".)