Creating a Syllabus: Assignment #4. Syllabus Construction Worksheet

Description: Once the course description is revised and established, we can follow the *backward design* processes put forward by Wiggins and McTighe, and develop a syllabus outline by thinking of the larger purpose of the course first (the goals of the course) and then establish clear learning outcomes for the course (what each student is assured of taking away from the course). Learning outcomes can be graded so the percentages of each outcome in terms of the total course grade can be assigned. After the goals and learning outcomes are listed for the entire course, then divide the course plan or calendar into three sections so that we can think more clearly about progression and learning in early or *emerging* learning, then *developing* learning and finally *advanced* learning. Next we plan the details, steps and activities backward from this outline. In all of these steps, we consider both our teaching philosophy and inclusivity statements as a foundation.

The backward process means we don't just start listing a series of activities without thinking clearly about the deeper goals and takeaways of each week or subsets of weeks. It helps to prioritize and gauge the pace, quantity and quality of the entire course's content.

Divide the layout of the syllabus into main sections as well as into columns. Working with the overall course learning outcomes then we decide the three more distinct learning outcomes related to stages of knowledge and thinking.

These three divisions merge Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning and the Guide to Critical Thinking.
What are the learning outcomes for each stage in your particular course?
List them for each area progressing from basic to developing to advanced.

Emerging Learning	(the first 1/3 of the class schedule)	basic knowledge and comprehension of ideas and skillsets.
Developing Learning	(the second 1/3 of the class schedule)	application of skills, contextual understandings, analysis to further knowledge.
Advanced Learning	(the final 1/3 of the class schedule)	synthesis of parts into a whole new realization and evaluation with criteria.

The syllabus outline first contains the class Information, course description, course goals, course learning outcomes with percentages of final grade, then begins the weekly schedule. The schedule can have dates and repeatable categories on the left column, the distinct activities on the next column and the three distinct learning outcome divisions beneath each third of the weeks of the course calendar or in a third column.

Read these articles first:

Backward Design https://risdcollegiateteaching.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/wiggins-mctighe-backward-design.pdf

Constructing a Syllabus, Michael Woolcock
https://risdcollegiateteaching.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/construct_syllabus.pdf

Constructing a Learning-Centered Syllabus: One Professor's Journey Aaron Richmond
https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA_60.pdf

Washington State University's *Guide to Critical Thinking* https://risdcollegiateteaching.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/guide-to-critical-thinking.pdf

Bloom's Taxonomy of Measurable Verbs https://www.utica.edu/academic/Assessment/new/Blooms%20Taxonomy%20-%20Best.pdf

RISD Academic Affairs Syllabus Guidelines http://academicaffairs.risd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Syllabus-Guidelines.pdf

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Use this as a preliminary planning outline to fill in your course content, values and progression of weekly classroom activity for the first draft of. Your course syllabus. This draft can be revised and amended throughout the semester until the final due date during critique week.

1. Start with your COURSE DESCRIPTION.

2. List your COURSE GOALS: (the aims and deeper understandings of the course, the enduring meanings of the course. The goals are future oriented and are aspirational. Often, they begin with the word "to" as in to understand, to gain, to expand, to learn, to grasp, to experiment, to integrate, etc. The aims are usually active verbs. (see Blooms Taxonomy of Active Verbs for the stages of learning.)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5. etc.

3. List your COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES: These include the concepts and skills that you assure each student will come away with from the class. These are usually nouns and include techniques, ideas, and projects and assignments. What are the outcomes of your entire course? Examples are: a deeper understanding, a basic ability, conceptual growth, 5 short preliminary projects, a final project, etc. What percentage of the final grade does each learning outcome have? List these.

Learning Outcomes of Course	Percentage of Final Course Grade
1.	10 % (as example)
2.	50 % (as example)
3.	? %
4.	etc.
5. etc.	etc.
	(must equal 100%)

4. What is the WEEKLY PLAN OF THE COURSE over the weeks of classes and the additional final class critique? Plan your schedule from the overall course goals and outcomes stated above**.** Divide your plan into three distinct areas: **emerging** ideas/techniques, **developing** ideas/techniques and **advanced i**deas/techniques and declare the learning outcomes for each area. These will be more specific or particular than the overall course learning outcomes, but will incorporate them.

List the **emerging** ideas or techniques for the first 1/3 of the class schedule. What events, demonstrations, lectures, critiques, projects, assignments are you planning for the first part of the course and in what order and based on The learning outcomes for the introductory part of the course.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

List the **developing** ideas or techniques for the second 1/3 of the class schedule. What events, projects, critiques, demonstrations, lectures or assignments are you planning for this stage of development? Consider the learning outcomes for this stage in particular.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

List the **advancing** ideas or techniques for the final 1/3 of the class schedule. These are based on the learning outcomes for this stage. What events, demonstrations, lectures, critiques, projects, assignments are you planning for the more fully integrative and advanced level of development?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

5. Organize the semester and weeks in clear graphical layout.
What are the repeatable items that can be listed, alternated or rotated in and out over the semester to build a structure, logic and clarity to your course schedule. These can follow the dates in each stage of the plan.
List and then edit the ones you will use selectively each week or alternate weeks. As example:

Reading
Assignment
Demonstration
Critique (what types of varying critiques, what questions could lead a critique)
Resources: Ppt, samples, museum objects, Podcasts, links,
Presentations

Visitors
Field Trips
Museum Study
Discussions
Feedback
Safety

6. Finally add the course details and policies of the department and institution to enhance your syllabus**.**

7. In planning your learning stages ask yourself these questions.

    How do students grow beyond entry level thinking and beyond generalized characteristics of **emerging critical thinking** which may include self-absorption, superficial contextual grounding, single sources for discussion, simplistic data or evidence or first responses, or sometimes a clinging to obvious ideas to avoid more challenging ideas?

    What sequences of activities and assignments expand the student beyond the developing stages? Characteristics of **developing critical thinking** may include the use of appropriate data or evidence, but further exploration is routine, somewhat rough integration of multiple viewpoints or ideas, and beginning original thinking and integrative skillsets.

    How does a student achieve **advanced critical thinking** skills in the studio? These may include the use of complex decision making, the regular placement of ideas in a wider context, an understanding of causality and procedural knowledge in skillsets, a clearer sense of organization of ideas, and the framing of original questions attended by the integration and synthesis of objective analysis.

Basic Benchmarks for the Syllabus Outline:

Understands basic divisions and reasoning and the goals, outcomes and activities are typical of discipline syllabi.

There is a general consideration but not a specific sense that the teaching philosophy and inclusivity statement are integrated into the outline.

Advanced Benchmarks for the Syllabus Outline:

A synthetic understanding of how to plan and advance a learning environment.

An original sense of conceptualizing projects and weekly planning that emanates from one's own teaching philosophy and inclusivity statements and is threaded throughout the document.