Westmont College
Guidelines for Course Syllabi

Every course needs a syllabus. The college grants you considerable freedom to construct syllabi that reflect your own goals, pedagogies, and vision for your courses. There are, however, several requirements that must be included in all syllabi. The following guidelines define those requirements and offer some recommendations about how you might construct the syllabi for your courses.

Purpose and Philosophy of the Syllabus

While the syllabus exists primarily for your students, it is helpful to remember that it also serves other purposes and is viewed by multiple audiences. Your syllabus should tell prospective and current students what the course is about, what they can expect to learn, and how they can complete it successfully. Your syllabus also provides your department and the college with easily accessible information such as course objectives and outcomes that serve both assessment and planning. The goal of **these** guidelines is to help faculty envision what a "thorough" syllabus looks like. A thorough syllabus is one that

- creates some structure for students and the course, but allows for flexibility over the course of a semester;
- outlines official rules of conduct, but resists overly prescriptive policies a; and
- provides a rationale for the course, the texts, and the topics, without teaching the entire class in the pages of the syllabus!

Just as a syllabus cannot capture all that you want students to know about your course, lists of outcomes and descriptions of your hopes for the students in your course will be limited in their ability to convey the full range of your aspirations for the impact of your course on your students. Still, such lists and descriptions have a place in every syllabus. More suggestions about that element of the syllabus will come in the section on Further Guidance, below.

Required Elements of Your Syllabus

As an instructor, you will bring your own style and the expectations of your particular discipline to the format and content of your syllabus. But every syllabus must answer some particular questions for your students. Those questions appear below. In the case of a few of them, noted with an asterisk, further guidance and recommendations follow.

- ◆ Course title, number, section, term, and year
- ◆ Class meeting place
- ◆ Instructor's information: office location, contact information, and office hours
- ◆ Books, materials, and other resources are required for this course*
- ◆ Course description and aspirations for student learning*

- ◆ Course learning outcomes and their alignment with the department's Program Learning Outcomes and the Institutional Learning Outcomes*****
- ◆ The GE student learning outcomes and certification criteria (if applicable)
- ◆ Main assignments and exams as well as their due dates
- ◆ Course policies about attendance, participation, make-up work, and due dates
- ◆ Disability statement*****
- ◆ Expectations regarding academic integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools*****
- ◆ Proposed course schedule of topics*****

You may choose to answer additional questions in your syllabus. Here are few to consider:

- ◆ Effective ways to study for this class
- ◆ Information about the homework
- ◆ Information about the exams
- ◆ Additional resources that might help succeeding in this course
- ◆ Library resources for this course*
- ◆ Westmont's emergency procedures*

Further Guidance

Books, materials, and other resources are required for this course
Every syllabus for an academic course should include the reading list. If no textbooks are required to be purchased for the class and PDFs of readings are provided on Canvas, the list of major instructional sources (articles, book chapters, digital materials, case studies, etc.) needs to be included in a syllabus for the college's records.

Proposed course schedule of topics
- Include important and required dates (exams, major assignment due dates, and required attendance for visiting speakers, performances, etc.).
- If appropriate for your course, provide a daily or weekly schedule of topics and associated readings, activities, and assignments.
- Identify what may change as the semester progresses

Course descriptions and aspirations for student learning
Some professors provide a short narrative in their syllabus (1-2 paragraphs) about the content and direction of the course. It might include the college catalogue description, but often goes beyond the terse language of the catalogue. This narrative can define the purpose of the course, might set the topic of the course in the context of particular goals and trends of your discipline, and can help students perceive why this topic is intriguing, relevant and worthy of their exploration.

This section could also convey your aspirations for students in the course. Students will, of course, be evaluated on their performance on certain assignments and measured against certain "learning outcomes" (more on outcomes below). But you have many other aspirations about the hopes, abilities, curiosity, affections, and virtues that will be enriched by the course. You may want to convey something about the experience that you hope students will have working and learning together. At its best, a syllabus can reinforce the values of pursuing the topic in the context of a liberal arts community of

learners, so you may want to make connections between your goals and aspirations and students' broader education, helping them see how your course connects to the planks of Westmont's mission.

Other colleges may look at this part of your syllabus to determine whether a student's credits for the course will transfer to another institution, so some specifics about the topics covered can be helpful.

Specific learning outcomes of the course and their alignment with the department's Program Learning Outcomes and the college's Institutional Learning Outcomes
As part of an ongoing effort to assess how well our students are learning and how we might make adjustments in our courses and programs, every syllabus should identify some specific **course learning outcomes** (CLOs). Student progress in relation to these course learning outcomes needs to be measured. The outcomes identify some of the specific knowledge, skills, or abilities students should be able to demonstrate following the successful completion of the course. You may also consider attitudinal outcomes, such as civic engagement, diversity, professionalism, and respect for civility in interpersonal relations. The number and kinds of outcomes per course will vary but it is important that you keep the number of learning outcomes manageable for you. *Since these are the outcomes that you will actually assess with specific tests, assignments, or other forms of evaluation, you should keep the number limited. Remember that outcomes need not capture all your goals and aspirations for your students. You can include broader, less measurable objectives when you answer the question above about aspirations.*

To help students see how your course fits into the mission of your department and the college, include information in this section about the links between your course learning outcomes, the **Program Learning Outcomes** (PLOs) for your department/program, and the **Institutional Learning Outcomes**.

Also indicate what activities in the course will enable you to determine whether students have achieved the course learning outcomes.

Below is brief checklist to guide your development of this section of the syllabus.

- The syllabus has a section titled "Course Learning Outcomes" (for the sake of consistency and clarity, it is important to use the word **outcome** here, rather than such words as *goals* or *objectives* or *standards*.);
- All the outcomes use active verbs to state what students can demonstrate, represent, produce or do (words such as *improve, understand, know*, *appreciate,* or *learn* belong in the section on goals and aspirations, but **not** here);
- When appropriate, at least some of the outcomes connect with your department's Program Learning Outcomes and the college's Institutional Learning Outcomes;
- The syllabus tells the reader how you will determine whether students are able to do what you want them to do by the end of the course (in other words, how the outcomes will be assessed);

You can find your department's **program learning outcomes** on your department's web page at http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/departments/**[your discipline]**/program-review.html

For example:
http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/departments/chemistry/program-review.html
A link to a document with the Institutional Learning Outcomes can be found here:

https://www.westmont.edu/office-provost/educational-effectiveness/documents
At the end of this guide are a few sample syllabus excerpts for this section.

Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Westmont's academic integrity policy prohibits us from "present[ing] another's work as our own." Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT attempt to do the work of writing, making, and other creative activities for their users. Therefore, **students should NOT substitute AI-generated content or ideas for original academic work**. Westmont faculty members design courses and assignments for students' incremental and active learning through methods such as reading, summarizing, discussion, and an authentic generative process in which a student does the work of critical thinking, making meaning, and constructing messages and other creative works. Faculty members reserve the right to prohibit or limit AI use in particular assignments or for the entire course.

"HOW did you do your work?" Students are advised to <u>document</u> their process of completing each assignment: e.g., their brainstorming, conversations, research queries, reading notes, writing or other creative expression, and the particular resources and tools used to achieve this work. Since software capabilities and AI integrations are rapidly changing, using even such tools as Grammarly without an instructor's permission puts a student's academic integrity at risk. When this use has been permitted, the content generated or modified by AI must be properly attributed (e.g., sharing the AI Archives link to that chat). Upon instructor request, a student should be able to narrate the process of assignment completion from start to finish, which shows **how a student is learning** within and across assignments.

Westmont's expectation regarding honor and respect in the classroom
You may consider adding this paragraph to your syllabus:

Westmont's Community Life Statement calls us to treat each other according to two commands from Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Further, our Diversity Matters document indicates that as we abide by these commandments, we learn to honor and respect one another. In this class, we will embody these commitments as we interact with one another and with the class material. If you experience or witness something that does not honor these commitments, please talk with the instructor as soon as possible. Please review the following webpage https://my.westmont.edu/s/classroom-honor-respect. You may also find it helpful to access the College's policy on Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination.

Accessibility and Accommodations
Westmont is committed to ensuring equal access to academic courses and college programs. In keeping with this commitment under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, individuals with diagnoses that impact major life activities are protected from discrimination and are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Students who choose to disclose a disability are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible in the semester to discuss potential accommodations for this course. Accommodations are designed to ensure equal access to programs for all students who have a disability that impacts their participation in college activities.
Email aro@westmont.edu or see westmont.edu/accessibility-resources for more information.

Library resources for this course

Voskuyl Library has provided this language you may choose to include in your syllabus:
Westmont librarians are available to advise and consult with you on your research assignments. You can drop by the Research Help Desk or schedule an appointment with a librarian assigned to your course. To identify a specific librarian and find subject-specific resources, consult Voskuyl Library's Research Guides or email askalibrarian@westmont.edu.

Westmont's emergency procedures
If an emergency occurs during instruction, it is important for you and your students to be familiar with recommended practices. Please review the following webpage (https://www.westmont.edu/emergency), include its link in your syllabi, and take a few minutes at the beginning of each semester to consider together how you could respond within each of your classrooms. Direct any questions or concerns to the Office of Institutional Resilience.

Final Thought: Consider the Tone You've Set in Your Syllabus. Once you have a draft of your syllabus, think about the tone you will set when your new students read your syllabus. Is the syllabus more pedantic or more inspiring? Have you set the tone for obedience or intellectual excitement? Think about whether you prefer the first person plural (inclusive "we" language) or second person singular (familiar "you"). Consider your audience and how your syllabus will be read by prospective students, parents, colleagues, and accrediting agencies.

Sample Syllabus Excerpts: Course Learning Outcomes Sections

From: Communication Studies COM-098: Introduction to Communication Research

COM Program Outcomes → Course Outcomes	Disciplinary Knowledge	Biblical & Ethical Principles*	Oral Communication Skills*	Written Communication Skills*
Understand/evaluate 4 research methods	Lecture & readings	Readings & lectures	Class discussions	Exams & article notes
Faith/personal application	Readings & lecture	Readings & lecture	Class discussions	
Conduct original research	Research projects	Implementation of projects		Research write up
Communicate findings well	Lit Review	Presentations/Reports	Poster presentation	Lit Review, flyers,

* Department PLO and College ILO overlap

From Chemistry CHM-006: General Chemistry II

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

Student Learning Outcome	Instructional Activity	Assessment
Apply relevant scientific and mathematical methods to analyze and solve problems effectively	Lecture Laboratory Experiments	Exams Quizzes Problem Sets In-class work Laboratory Assignments
Identify ways in which the scientific approach to knowledge can be used to investigate the physical and living world	Lecture Laboratory Experiments	Problem Sets Exams Laboratory Assignments
Survey the relationships between scientific knowledge and the Christian faith	Lecture Discussion	Reflection Questions Exams

These outcomes are related to the study of General Chemistry, which is a required part of the chemistry major. Your success in this class will contribute to you reaching the outcomes of the program as a whole, which are shown below.