



Cañada College Syllabus Guide

Introduction

This guide offers an outline of the (1) best practices for making your syllabi equitable, (2) required elements that need to make up your syllabi, and (3) accessibility formatting guidelines. The goal of this guide is to support faculty in creating syllabi for the success of all students, especially our disproportionately impacted student groups, and to align our syllabi with the [mission, vision, and values of Cañada College](#).

Our syllabi are often the first impression students have of us, our teaching, and our courses. Because of this, we want to be sure our syllabi welcome all students into our courses, empower students to feel ready to take on the challenge of our courses, and support students in getting started and getting help successfully.

For more information about the role our syllabi play in students' success, why it's important for us to do a syllabus review, and additional reflection activities, please read the [Center for Urban Education's Syllabus Review Guide for Equity-Minded Practice](#).

#1 - Equitable Learner-Centered Syllabus Best Practices

The following strategies are the from [CUE's Syllabus Review Guide, Pages 12-13](#):

DEMYSTIFYING college policies and practices

- Provide students with the information they need to successfully complete the course and navigate the college.
 - Include basic information about the course (e.g., course description, objectives, instructor contact information and office hours, grading scheme).
 - Includes information on how and where additional support can be obtained, from the instructor and campus support centers
- Present information in such a way that a first-time college student can easily make sense of the syllabus
 - Written clearly, in plain language, with limited academic jargon
 - Formatted and ordered in a way that highlights what students need to know to maximize their learning and success

WELCOMING students and creating a classroom culture in which they feel cared for

- Communicate care and support
 - Use language and tone that makes students feel cared for and valued.
 - Example:
 - Before → “This course will...” or “Students will...”
 - After → “We will...” or “You will...”
 - Remove punitive language and replace it with collegial and supportive language.
 - Example:

- Before → “Late work will be penalized by 50%”
 - After → “Late work is still eligible for 50% partial credit”
- Convey sensitivity to students’ entering skill level, notes that aspects of the course can be challenging, and suggests that it is acceptable and beneficial for students to seek help, whether or not they are struggling.
- Convey a willingness to work individually with students who need extra help.
- Establish respect and inclusion as class norms.
 - Set ground rules for respectful class discussion.
 - Include a class [anti-discrimination policy or Inclusivity Statement](#).
 - Communicate commitment to talking through racist and discriminatory comments or behavior that arise in class or on campus.

VALIDATING students’ ability to be successful

- Communicate belief that all students are expected to succeed
 - Articulate that students—regardless of their stated intentions—are capable of obtaining their educational goals.
 - Offer different types of assignments and forms of assessment that give students multiple ways to demonstrate their learning and strengths.

CREATING A PARTNERSHIP in which faculty and students work together to ensure success

- Communicate a commitment to working with students for their success
 - State what you expect of students as learners, and what students can expect from you as an instructor
 - Articulate willingness to receive feedback from students about your teaching practices
 - Articulate willingness to use a variety of teaching approaches to foster learning
- Communicate respect for students as learners
 - Articulate respect for students as autonomous, critical, and reflective learners
 - State how class and course objectives will help students succeed in future academic work, and advance career and life goals

REPRESENTING a range of racial/ethnic experiences and backgrounds in assignments, readings, and other materials

- Communicates the value of students’ racial/ethnic backgrounds as sources of learning and knowledge
 - Includes readings, activities, and assignments that are culturally relevant and inclusive
 - Includes assignments that ask students to draw on their experiential knowledge and/or knowledge from their communities
 - Includes assignments that ask students to investigate real-world problems affecting the communities from which they come

DECONSTRUCTING the presentation of white students as the ‘norm’

- Promotes awareness and critical examination of students’ assumptions, beliefs, and privilege
 - Includes readings, activities, and assignments that ask students to critically examine their assumptions about different racial/ethnic groups, and the privileges or disadvantages they accrue by virtue of their race/ethnicity.

- Promote awareness and critical examination of dominant norms and broader social inequalities
 - Includes readings, activities, and assignments that ask students to examine the history and contemporary experiences of people and communities that face discrimination, racism, and marginalization
 - Includes readings, activities, and assignments that ask students to question dominant, racialized norms, as well as inequalities in major social institutions (e.g., education, health, law).

#2 - Required Syllabus Elements Checklist

The order and presentation of information in your syllabi is at your and your Division's discretion. Be sure to share a copy of your syllabi with your Division office at the start of each semester.

General Course Information - Provide the basics of which course this is, and when and how it meets.

- ☐ Course Title, Number, CRN (Course Record Number), and Class Units
 - ☐ Ex: COMM 110 - Public Speaking - CRN 81557 (3 units)
- ☐ Semester and Year; Class Meeting Day(s), Time(s) & Modality
 - ☐ Ex: Fall 2023 - Monday 8:10 am - 9:25am (In-Person)
- ☐ TBA (To Be Arranged) Class Meetings (*If Applicable*) - If your course has TBA hours included on the course outline, you must include all required meeting and assignment information.
- ☐ Class Meeting Location
 - ☐ Canvas for all Online - Asynchronous or Hybrid modalities
 - ☐ Zoom for all Online - Synchronous modalities
 - ☐ Campus, Building & Room Number for all Face-to-Face or Hybrid modalities
 - ☐ Thorough explanation of Multi-Modal modalities
- ☐ Course Prerequisites, Co-Requisites, and/or Advisories from the [Course Outline of Record \(COR\)](#)
 - ☐ [Honors/Dual Enrollment Information](#) (if applicable)
- ☐ [Course Transferability, CSU, UC, GE Area](#)

Instructor Information - Introduce yourself briefly and offer students varied ways to contact you with questions or concerns.

- ☐ Instructor's Name & Preferred Name
- ☐ Instructor Contact Information - District email address, and any other contact information (office phone number, Canvas Inbox, etc.) and planned response times
 - ☐ Office Hours - days, times and locations
 - ☐ Consider including information on how students can contact you, as well as how you plan to contact students (announcements, inbox messages, etc.)

Course Purpose - Introduce students to what they will be learning and achieving in your course.

- ☐ Course Purpose - Based on course description in College Catalog, but can be edited.
- ☐ Course Goals - Broad general goals of the course that relate to program PLOs.
- ☐ Course Objectives - [Student Learning Outcomes \(SLOs\) as listed without edits in COR](#)

What to Expect in This Course - Outline everything students need to know and to have in order to be successful.

- ☐ Teaching Environment, Modality & Methods
 - ☐ Lab availability (computer labs, language labs, science labs, etc.) - if applicable
 - ☐ Canvas Access Information Related to Course Modality - Access course materials on our learning management system, Canvas. You will use your Cañada College username and password to log in to the Canvas through the [mySMCCD OneLogin Portal](#).
- ☐ Required textbooks, course materials, and supplies. Indicate zero textbook cost (ZTC) or low-textbook cost (LTC) if applicable
 - ☐ [Inclusive access statement](#) (if applicable)
- ☐ Provided and Recommended materials, texts or supplies

Course Plan - Clearly outline the big picture plan for the course. The level of detail included in the syllabus is up to you, but be sure that the information in the syllabus aligns with what students see throughout the semester in Canvas.

- ☐ Outline of Units/Topics, most often this is outlined weekly
 - ☐ Reading Assignments (chapter(s) and/or page numbers)
 - ☐ Formative Assignments and Projects with Due Dates
 - ☐ Summative Assessments - Dates, Formats and Time Constraints (if any)
 - ☐ Consider including a disclaimer like: *Course content and schedule are subject to reasonable change based on the needs of the class.*
- ☐ Drop Deadlines, Flex Days and Holidays (see Academic Calendar)
 - ☐ Consider including a disclaimer like: *Course content and schedule are subject to reasonable change based on the needs of the class.*

How Learning Will Be Measured - explain to students how you'll be checking on their progress to see what they're learning.

- ☐ Clear Grading Scales, Policies, and Evaluation Criteria (Including Extra Credit, Late Work and Make Up Work Policies)
 - ☐ How Students Can Access Grades and Feedback
- ☐ Attendance Expectations / Participation Information, Especially for Online Modalities (**Note:** It is a violation of Title V to use "attendance" as a criterion for final grades; however, "participation" can be used as a criterion as long as it is clearly stated in the syllabus.)
- ☐ [Final Exam Date and Time](#)

Additional Course Information - Include all other information that is applicable to your course that students might need. Consider linking to another document, or Canvas page, where you can include information that students might need, but might not need right now. This will keep your syllabus "short and simple."

- ☐ Your Expectations of Students/Advice and Strategies for How Students Can Succeed in Your Course
- ☐ [Title IX statement](#)
- ☐ [Student Support Services & Resources](#)
- ☐ [How Students Can Request a Name Change in Canvas](#)
- ☐ [Withdraw Deadline & Information on How to Drop](#)
- ☐ [Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)
- ☐ [Academic Integrity/Honesty and Student Code of Conduct](#)
 - ☐ [Include statement on the use of AI tools](#)

#3 - Accessible Syllabus Formatting Checklist

Below you'll find guides for how to apply each of the accessibility formatting elements to your syllabus in Word and in Google Docs. There are no guides for PDFs here because you should create your syllabus and apply these accessible elements in Word or Google Docs first, and then export as a PDF. This work flow will generate an accessible PDF.

- ☐ **Headings** - Apply heading styles to the structure of your syllabus.
 - ☐ [Microsoft Word Headings Guide](#)
 - ☐ [Google Docs Headings Guide](#)
- ☐ **True Lists** - Be sure to format your lists as either ordered or unordered lists.
 - ☐ [Microsoft Word True Lists Guide](#)
 - ☐ [Google Docs True Lists Guide](#)
- ☐ **Descriptive Links** - Links in your syllabus should be concise, descriptive, and meaningful out of context.
 - ☐ [Microsoft Word Descriptive Links Guide](#)
 - ☐ [Google Docs Descriptive Links Guide](#)
- ☐ **Alt Text** - All images should have meaningful alt text.
 - ☐ [Microsoft Word Alt Text Guide](#)
 - ☐ [Google Docs Alt Text Guide](#)
- ☐ **Tables** - Keep your tables simple and include row and column headers.
 - ☐ [Microsoft Word Accessible Tables Guide](#)
 - ☐ [Google Docs Accessible Tables Guide](#)
- ☐ **Length** - Aim for your syllabus to be no more than 7 pages. Keep your syllabi short and simple, with the most important information at the beginning, to ensure that students are able to digest the information they need to get a thorough understanding of your course.

Resources & References

- [Sample Policies & Statements](#)
- [Example Syllabi from C nada Faculty](#)
- Articles About Language
 - [ASCCC Defining the Gaps: The Power of Language](#)
 - [Gift-Giving Discourse: Decriminalizing Academic Process Language](#)
- [Syllabus Review Protocol from CUE](#) (Full document)

- [Developing Equity Mindedness From the Inside Out](#), EAPC Guide for Instructors