

Pedagogical Pragmatics (P²): Writing a Warm SYLLABUS

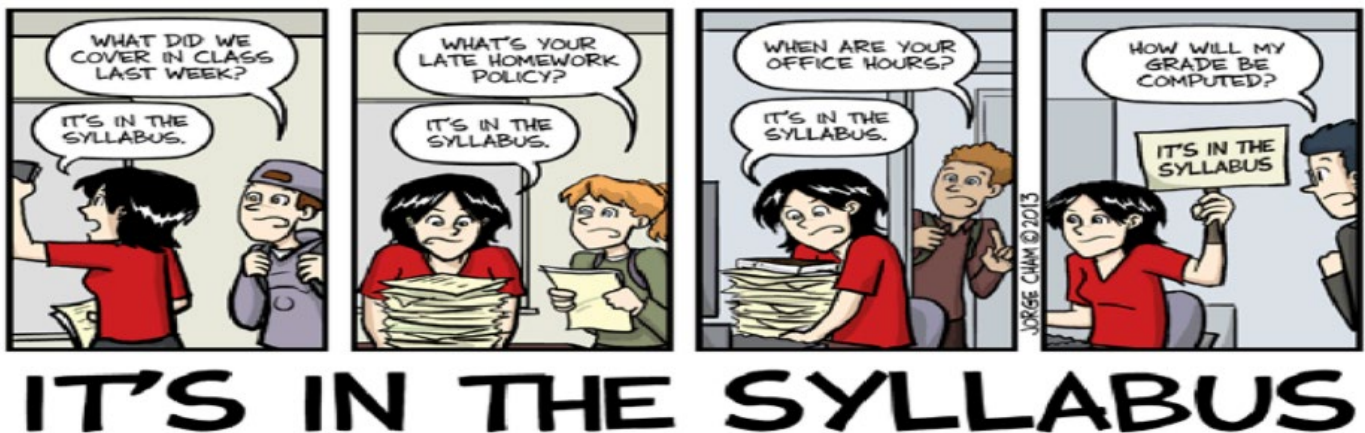


Oregon State University
Center for Teaching
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A syllabus serves many functions, generally thought to serve as a contract, as a permanent record, as a communication device, and as a learning tool/cognitive map (Richmond et al., 2022). Departments often have templates for syllabi content in addition to university templates, but it is also important to pay attention to tone. Pedagogical research suggests warm, learner-centered syllabi, can help students learn.

What is it?

A warm-tone syllabus establishes a rapport between you and your students. It allows communication for the course expectations and is personalized to the instructor. It uses personal pronouns and inclusive language and avoids confrontational or condescending language. A warm-tone syllabus conveys your openness and availability to your students. Warm syllabi are learner-centered and show your focus on what information and tools you can provide for your students to promote learning instead of just describing what you will cover, and listing due dates and policies. Students get to make inferences about your personality how approachable you are.


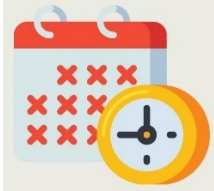




pled Higher and Deeper by Jorge Cham
www.phdcomics.com

How do you do it? Key Considerations

- Use a statement sharing your passion for the class and your personality.
- Add “Supportive,” and “Reach Out” statements that make help seeking normative.
- Add visual elements.
- Recognize your role in your students’ success.
- Provide tools such as learning strategies, common pitfalls, and campus resources.
- Provide rationale for assignments/exams by linking them to student learning outcomes.
- Make sure all dates and language is current and updated.
- Be CCOMFE: Clear, Compassionate, Organized, Multi-faceted, Flexible, and Engaging.



Cold/Unfriendly Tone Syllabus	Examples	Warm/Friendly Tone Syllabus
If you need to contact me outside of office hours, you may email me, call my office, or contact the department and leave a message (Denton, p. 179).		I welcome you to contact me outside of class and student hours. You may email me, call my office, or contact the department and leave a message (Denton, p. 179).
I expect you to attend every class. If you cannot attend a class, please let me know. If circumstances make you miss more than 3 classes during the semester, I will drop you from the class roster in accordance with the University attendance policy (Harnish, p. 324).	Attendance 	You should attend every class but extenuating circumstances arise that can make this difficult. If you cannot attend a class, please let me know. If circumstances make you miss more than 3 classes during the semester, you may be overextended and should drop the class per the University attendance policy (Harnish, p. 323).
Come prepared to actively participate in this course. This is the best way to engage you in learning the material (and it makes the lectures more interesting (Harnish, p. 323).	Class Participation 	I hope you actively participate in this course. I say this because I found it is the best way to engage you in learning the material (and it makes the lectures more fun) (Harnish, p. 323).
For most students, exams will take approximately 45 to complete, but you will have the full class meeting time (Harnish, p. 324).	Exams 	For most students, exams will take approximately 45 to complete, but please take your time and remember that you have the full class meeting time (Harnish, p. 324).

How We Know It Matters? The Evidence

- Students receiving a syllabus with a welcome statement” had greater motivation to take the course and a greater willingness to seek help from the professor (Denton, 2018).
- A syllabus with a “Reach Out for Success” statement influenced the likelihood students would reach out to their faculty member with personal problems. (Gurung, et al., 2021).
- Students who viewed a visual syllabus rated the teacher as kinder, more creative, and more approachable (Nusbaum, et al, 2020).
- Students using a learner-centered syllabi rated faculty as more creative, caring, happy, receptive, reliable, and enthusiastic as were more engaged (Richmond, 2016).
- A friendly toned syllabus can enhance student-faculty engagement (Harnish, 2011).

Resources and References: <https://beav.es/3Ft>



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