

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR SYLLABI AND CANVAS**

### ***SYLLABI***

Faculty must create a syllabus – distinct from their Canvas page – for students in their courses. Syllabi function as a classroom contract. Syllabi should be kept by faculty for their own records and should be distributed to the appropriate staff member in the department.

### ***LEARNING OBJECTIVES***

Faculty are strongly encouraged to identify course learning objectives on course syllabi, especially for required major courses and general education courses. These objectives communicate to students how individual courses contribute to their broader education as film and media studies and clarify how class topics, activities, and assignments connect to the goals of the course. Faculty teaching general education courses may want to consult campus guidelines – which tend to be broad in scope – and adapt them to the specific subject being taught.

### ***COURSE POLICIES***

#### *Attendance:*

Syllabi should have a clearly stated attendance policy, though the specifics of the policy will vary based on the size, topic, and scheduling of the course. Attendance policies should signal that in-class attendance and participation is vital to the learning that takes place in FMS courses. Attendance policies also should discourage students from attending class if they are sick but should communicate that it is the *student's responsibility* to make up missed work, inclusive but not limited to getting the notes from a classmate and attending faculty office hours.

#### *Participation:*

What constitutes participation may vary from course to course and, accordingly participation policies are up to the discretion of the faculty member.

#### *Academic Dishonesty:*

Faculty should have a clear policy regarding violations of UCI's academic honesty policy. Faculty are encouraged to include a link to this policy on their syllabi. They also are encouraged to adopt the following penalties for violations of academic honesty: students who have violated the policy will receive a zero on the assignment and a report will be filed with the Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct. While faculty members may use their discretion in implementing the policy, we recommend that the potential penalties for violations of academic honesty be clearly articulated on course syllabi.

*Technology:*

While appropriate uses of technology in the classroom will vary from course to course, faculty should establish boundaries around proper technology use in the classroom. Specifically, faculty should prohibit uses of technology that disrupt the learning of other students in the classroom. This may include restricting the use of light-emitting screens during screenings.

*Communication Expectations:*

Faculty should have a clear statement on their syllabi as to when students may expect replies to emails or other forms of communication. For example, faculty may adopt a policy that they will respond to student communication within 8 business hours or within 24 hours.

*Campus Resources:*

Faculty are encouraged to include links to the Disability Services Center, UCI's Title IX Policy, and the UCI Basic Needs Hub on their syllabi, in addition to any other relevant resources for students.

*Language Warnings:*

Faculty may want to include "language warnings" on their syllabi, especially if students will be viewing material outside of the screening time. As an example:

Given our topic, some course readings and screenings include racially-charged language that is patently offensive if, in each case, contextualized. Please use headphones and/or carefully monitor your surroundings when engaging the screenings outside of the context of class or in the presence of others.

*Office Hours:*

Faculty should hold at minimum of one hour/week of dedicated office hours for each class they are teaching in a given quarter, as well as be available to meet with students "by appointment."

***COURSE ASSIGNMENTS***

Course assignments, course deadlines, and weights of course assignments should be included on course syllabi. The syllabus functions as a contract between faculty and students and should clearly communicate to students what will be expected of them over the course of the quarter.

While different courses require different sorts of assignments, the following guidelines should be kept in mind:

- Weighing course assignments close to equally – and not relying on a final assignment as the primary determinant of students' grades – can assure that should unforeseen circumstances arise (such as global pandemics), students' final grades match their accomplishments in the course across the quarter.
- Scheduling an assignment for submission early in the quarter can both allow faculty to get a sense of student preparedness and capacity and can provide students with clarity about faculty expectations.
- Returning graded work in a timely manner can be crucial to enable students to incorporate feedback and improve on future assignments.

- Faculty teaching courses with a substantial writing component are encouraged to include the FMS grading rubric with their course materials.

### ***COURSE SCHEDULE***

Course schedules on syllabi should include the following:

- Topics to be covered on a weekly – or class-by-class – basis
- Dates of class meetings
- Due dates for assignments
- Clear indications of required work to be performed outside of class (eg. readings)

Such clarity is useful for students and faculty to anticipate course topics and understand the trajectory of course content.

### ***CANVAS***

Students navigate Canvas most easily when all course content is located on a singular page – such as the modules page or the Canvas home page – of Canvas.

Use of the “assignments” function on Canvas is strongly encouraged; it not only provides a stable site for students to access information about assignments but ports due dates into their Canvas dashboard.

Faculty are encouraged to use Canvas gradebook to share grades and feedback with students and the use of the “announcements” function on Canvas to communicate with students.