APPENDIX C
Syllabus Guidelines
Adapted from “WRITING A SYLLABUS”
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Course Information
The first items of information in a syllabus should give course information: course title, course number, and credit hours. Also, are there any prerequisites? Is the permission of the instructor required? Include the location of classroom, and the days and hours class/lab/studio/etc. meets.

Instructor Information
Second, the students need information about the instructor: full name, title; office location (and where to leave assignments), office phone number; office hours. Depending on the size of the class (and other factors), it may be desirable to include an emergency phone number; quite often this can be the number of the School of Music office. Many instructors give the students their home telephone number. If you do, it is well to also list restrictions, e.g., "No calls between 10:30 pm and 8:30 am please." If you are helped by teaching assistants or other instructors, their names, locations, and phone numbers should also be listed.

Text, Readings, Materials
College-level instruction -- at least in the United States -- is heavily dependent upon the use of print material, if not a required textbook, then a variety of readings. These are becoming increasingly costly. The syllabus should provide the students with detailed information about the following:

Textbook(s) -- include the title, author, date (and edition), publisher, cost, where available, (often it is appropriate to indicate why the particular text was chosen and/or how extensively it will be used).

Supplementary reading(s) - in addition to the detailed bibliographic information about the readings, the syllabus should indicate whether the readings are required or only recommended, and whether the readings are on reserve in the library or available for purchase in the bookstore. Sometimes instructors make their own books available to students. If this is the case for the given course, that information might be included in the syllabus along with whatever conditions apply to their use.

Materials --other required materials, e.g., music manuscript paper, etc.

Course Descriptions/Objectives
The bare minimum would be to repeat the description in the college catalog, assuming that it describes the course with some accuracy. Certainly a paragraph describing the general content of the course would not be excessive. Information about instructional methods, e.g., large lecture with small discussion sections, may also be included here. Some instructors who have developed detailed instructional objectives include them in their syllabi. Such inclusion may result in information of general course goals (e.g., the learning and application of the general principles of..., or the development of the skill..., or the development of a more positive attitude toward...) can help orient the student to the purpose of the course, the instructor's expectations, etc.

Course Calendar/Schedule
Some instructors are concerned that, if they include a daily - or weekly - schedule of topics to be covered, they can be held legally liable if they depart from it. One remedy for this is to state that the schedule is tentative and subject to change depending upon the progress of the class. In many cases the instructor has only limited flexibility about scheduling anyway, e.g., in a multi-section course where departmental exams are administered on specific dates, or in a course that is a prerequisite for another course (the material has to be -- should be -- covered by the end of the course). If we expect students to meet our deadlines, to plan their work, we must give them the information needed for such planning. The calendar or schedule should also include the dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. The calendar should also include due dates for major assignments. For example, when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due. Finally, any required special events need to be included in the calendar, e.g., required attendance at specific concerts, etc.
Course Policies

The following topics should be addressed:

Attendance, lateness -- at least for freshman and sophomore classes, and perhaps for all undergraduate classes, the syllabus should include some statement about attendance (is it required, will students who attend regularly be given a break if the grade is borderline?) and about lateness, at least if it is penalized. (Students who arrive late disturb the class, but on some campuses it is not possible for a student to get from one part of the campus to another within the allotted time; sometimes our colleagues do not let students leave promptly.)

Class participation -- in the medieval lecture hall, class participation was not an issue, but if students are to learn to apply, analyze, synthesize, etc, they need to be active. Such approaches are contrary to the experiences -- and preferences -- of many students. If active participation is expected, the syllabus needs to say so. It also needs to explain if/how participation will be graded.

Missed exams or assignments -- since these affect grades, they are of interest to students. Syllabi should inform the students whether exams and assignments can be made up; statements regarding earning extra credit should also be included if that is an option.

Academic dishonesty -- in some syllabi this is treated as a separate area. The syllabus should address questions related to cheating and plagiarism. On campuses where these topics are treated in detail in a student handbook, it is sufficient for the syllabus to simply refer the students to that handbook. In the absence of such a resource, details in the syllabus are necessary. Many students actually do not know what constitutes plagiarism. We owe it to the students to explain what is considered to be plagiarism or cheating.

Grading -- this topic, even more that academic dishonesty, is often treated as a separate area. Given the students' interest in grades, such treatment is certainly defensible. Each syllabus should include details about how the students will be evaluated -- what factors will be included, how they will be weighted, and how they will be translated into grades. Information about the appeals procedures, often included in a student handbook, is also appropriate at least for freshman and sophomore classes.

Support Services

NIU makes available to the students a considerable variety of instructional and personal support services. We often bemoan the fact that the students do not avail themselves of these services. Perhaps this is because we do not draw their attention to the possibilities. Here are a few:

Founders, Library, Music Library--The library is probably the oldest resource, and perhaps still the richest. Include a brief statement in the syllabus identifying collections, journals, abstracts, audio or video tapes, etc. that the library has which are relevant to the course would be appropriate.

Music Computer Lab (MCL)-- PC and Macintosh computers, Korg keyboards, music editing and theory/aural skills software, word-processing, Internet access, etc.

Counseling and Student Development Center--Located in Campus Life Building 200, 753-1206, CSDC offers a wide range of services, including career counseling, a career resource center, educational skills assistance (LASSL), psychological services, consultation for at-risk students, developmental workshops, and leadership and peer educational training.

Students, Legal Assistance Office--Holmes Student Center, sixth floor, 753-1701. Services of two licensed attorneys who make information and aid available in a wide variety of cases.

Office of the Ombudsman--Holmes Student Center, sixth floor, 753-1414. Provides neutral and confidential assistance and advice regarding concerns related to the University.

Center for Access-Ability Resources--Health Services Building, 753-1303. Provides services for students with disabilities.