## Learner-Centered Syllabus Template

**<--Delete this page before distributing to your students-->**

### General Information

* Be sure to check with your department chair to see if there is specific information or policies that should be included in your syllabus.
* Also check with your department chair if there are specific materials that should be used within your course to maintain consistency between course sections or standards already in place.
* The information provided on this syllabus is a general guideline. Edit as you see fit to best suit the goals and format of your course.
* Pay particular attention to the text in **red**, which includes clarifications or placeholder text that you will want to make sure to edit. Be sure to change the text to black when document is complete.
* If you have a difficult time seeing the color red and cannot see a difference in shade between it and other areas of the syllabus, please reach out to the Online Teaching Coordinator, who can help make adjustments for your particular situation.

### Things to keep in mind to help make your syllabus accessible:

* Chunk information into shorter paragraphs and use bullet points, lists, or columns to display or organize information.
* Use meaningful text in hyperlinks, which are words that describe the link versus “click here” language. An example is the “Styles for formatting your text” link below. Adding endnotes with the URLs will allow this document to remain accessible even if it is printed.
* Use tables sparingly and be sure to clearly label column and row headers. Also fill out the Alt Text information.
* Use [Styles for formatting your text](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/apply-styles-f8b96097-4d25-4fac-8200-6139c8093109)[[1]](#endnote-2), like Headings and Strong to make text larger or bold.
* Use underlining for hyperlinks only.
* Avoid multiple extra spaces, using tabs when necessary.
* Avoid extra lines within your document by hitting “enter.” Use the “Add Space After Paragraph” feature to increase space between and/or adjust line spacing (recommended 1.15” minimum between lines) to create separation. Go to Home > Paragraph > Line and Paragraph Spacing Line and Paragraph Spacing button to make adjustments.
* Use a sans serif font like Calibri or Arial which do not have the extra decorations or strokes at the end of the letters (see fonts like Times New Roman for a comparison).
* **Day/time of online course meetings:**
* **Academic credit:**
* **Course format: (e.g., lecture, lecture + discussion, lecture + lab, seminar, etc.)**

## Instructor’s Information

Include your name, title, preferred contact information, your online office hours times and location. Also, link to your website or social media presence, if applicable. Add a brief statement about your expertise in the content area.

**Instructor Name, Title**

* 815-753-1234
* [username@niu.edu](mailto:username@niu.edu*) (Best way to reach me)
* Other Methods of contact
* Virtual Office Hours: M & W – 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.
* Physical Office Hours: T & Th – 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.
* Physical Office Location: XX 123

**TA Name, Title**

* 815-753-1234 (Text-Best way to reach TA)
* [username@niu.edu](mailto:username@niu.edu*)
* Other Methods of contact
* Virtual Office Hours: T & Th – noon to 1:00 p.m.
* Physical Office Hours: T & F – 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
* Physical Office Location: XX 123

## What is this course about?

Briefly describe the course in a welcoming way, clearly explaining why you find the course important and engaging. What is this course about? What questions does it attempt to answer? How does the course fit into the overall curriculum?

## What background knowledge do I need before taking this course?

Note specific prerequisite courses, in addition to any specific knowledge, skills or background needed to successfully complete this course.

## What will I learn in this course?

List the learning objectives for the course (the broad course goals should be in the "What is this course about?" section above). The objectives should be specific and measurable and should clearly state what students will be able to do after successfully completing the course. [Bloom’s Taxonomy](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/)[[2]](#endnote-3) could be very helpful for writing the learning objectives.

## What will I do in this course?

What types of activities comprise the course and the classes? Describe the activities and assignments you will use to help students reach the learning objectives, and by which you will assess (formatively and summatively) student mastery of the learning objectives (for example, in-class discussion, debate, writing (specific type of paper), laboratory investigations, library research, deliberate with classmates about ethical dilemmas, etc.) How will students benefit from each type of activity? (you do not need to include the specific points or grading basis; there is a later section in the template for the grading scale).

## How can I prepare for the class sessions to be successful?

How should students prepare for class? How should students plan to engage in the class? Will the students need to review videos or written materials before class or lab sessions? What is the workflow of the course? For example, do students watch videos or read materials or write discussion posts before online meetings?

## What required texts, materials, and technologies will I need?

List the required texts or resources that students will need to acquire, including textbooks, software, lab manuals. List the sources where the materials should be obtained, and costs (if any). For texts, provide the full bibliographic entry for each text and URLs if applicable. Full reading or viewing lists, along with assigned dates will be in the schedule below – this section is primarily to give students explicit information about materials they need, and any anticipated costs.

Note that due to challenges with shipping, purchasing and/or importing physical materials (textbooks, books, video), we encourage faculty whenever possible to consider [Open Educational Resources (OER)](http://library.millersville.edu/oer/OERforEducators)[[3]](#endnote-4), working with the library to purchase or license electronic copies or access, and/or selecting materials that can be purchased or accessed electronically.

What technologies are students required to learn or purchase? Where can students find out more about these technologies? Who will students contact if they have difficulties?

## What optional texts or resources might be helpful?

List the optional texts, reference material or resources that will be used in the course. You may instead refer students to links or references on your course website. If none, delete this section.

## How will my grade be determined?

List the graded assessments and how they will add up to the total course grade. Any graded assignment should be clearly listed in the section “What will I do in this course?” Include your overall grading scale (for example, A = 90% and higher, etc.)

## What are the course policies?

Here you may describe topics such as contact information and availability, discussion guidelines, course community building, attendance, make-up work, assignment deadlines, academic integrity, plagiarism. Here is some suggested below.

### Communications

Explain to students how they are expected to communicate with you (and TAs). For example, will you use the forums or email to answer questions? Detail when you’ll be able to respond to their questions. Tell students what you expect from them to stay on top of course communications (for example, check email or course site every other day). How will time zone differences affect due dates or attendance?

### Discussion Guidelines

Civility is an essential ingredient for academic discourse. All communications for this course should be conducted constructively, civilly, and respectfully. Differences in beliefs, opinions, and approaches are to be expected. Please bring any communications you believe to be in violation of this class policy to the attention of your instructor. Active interaction with peers and your instructor is essential to success in this course, paying particular attention to the following:

* Be respectful of others and their opinions, valuing diversity in backgrounds, abilities, and experiences.
* Challenging the ideas held by others is an integral aspect of critical thinking and the academic process. Please word your responses carefully and recognize that others are expected to challenge your ideas. A positive atmosphere of healthy debate is encouraged.
* Read your online discussion posts carefully before submitting them.

### Academic Accommodations

If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located in the Campus Life Building, Suite 180, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or drc@niu.edu.

Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations. The sooner you let me know your needs, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

### Academic Integrity

Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.

### Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

* Brainstorming and refining your ideas;
* Fine tuning your research questions;
* Finding information on your topic;
* Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts; and
* Checking grammar and style.

The use of generative AI tools is **not** permitted in this course for the following activities:

* Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts assigned to you or content that you put into a Zoom chat.
* Completing group work that your group has assigned to you, unless it is mutually agreed upon that you may utilize the tool.
* Writing a full draft of a writing assignment.
* Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or papers to complete class assignments.

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited in order to stay within university policies on academic honesty. For example, *[Insert citation style for your discipline. See these resources for*[*APA guidance*](https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt)*, and for*[*other citation formats*](https://www.scribbr.com/ai-tools/chatgpt-citations/)*.]*. Any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways [insert the penalty here]. When in doubt about permitted usage, please ask for clarification.

### Inclusivity

The NIU Office of Academic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has established the [Faculty Toolkit](https://www.niu.edu/diversity/resources/toolkit/index.shtml)[[4]](#endnote-5) where you will find a range of inclusive statements recommended to be included on course syllabi. The toolkit also provides resources to navigate classroom dynamics and create culturally responsive teaching.

## What university resources can help me during this course?

In this section you may wish to highlight particularly relevant resources or other resources that are discipline-specific that are useful for students.

## What is the expected course schedule?

Create a course schedule, using a format like the one below. For accessibility purposes, do not use tables for formatting purposes. Add more weeks as needed.

### Week 1: Date

* Class topic/unit name:
* Pre-class work for students:
  + List what students need to do to prepare for class; add more lines if needed.
* Planned in-class activities:
  + List in-class activities; add more lines if needed.
* Assignments due:
  + List assignments and their due dates; add more lines if needed.

### Week 2: Date

* Class topic/unit name:
* Pre-class work for students:
  + List what students need to do to prepare for class; add more lines if needed.
* Planned in-class activities:
  + List in-class activities; add more lines if needed.
* Assignments due:
  + List assignments and their due dates; add more lines if needed.

This syllabus template is based upon the [Duke Flexible Teaching Syllabus Template](https://flexteaching.li.duke.edu/files/2020/06/Online-Syllabus-Template-1.docx)[[5]](#endnote-6), customized for use by Northern Illinois University faculty.

1. https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/apply-styles-f8b96097-4d25-4fac-8200-6139c8093109?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/ [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. https://library.millersville.edu/oer/OERforEducators [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. https://www.niu.edu/diversity/resources/toolkit/index.shtml [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. https://flexteaching.li.duke.edu/files/2020/06/Online-Syllabus-Template-1.docx [↑](#endnote-ref-6)