

Westmont College Syllabus Suggestions

According to the Faculty Handbook, professors are required to develop a syllabus for each course taught.

The following guidelines are suggested to the faculty for developing course syllabi. The rationale for covering most, if not all of these items, is that the syllabus should be a tool for providing:

1. Information that the student needs to know.
2. Information that the student wants to know.
3. Information that the professor wants the student to know.

The syllabus can also be a valuable tool by which the professor begins presenting to the student the educational mission of the department and the college, and can assist the student in placing the particular course within the context of the broader mission.

Finally, several college documents are referenced that cover policies and procedures that the faculty should consider as courses are designed. These are:

1. *Westmont College Catalog, 2001-02* (WCC).
2. *Academic Policies and Procedures, 2000-02* (APP).
3. *Westmont College Faculty Handbook* (WCFH, November, 2001).

SYLLABUS CONTENT

Table of Contents: Consider including this as a way of helping students quickly access relevant information.

A. Specific Course Information

1. Course number, section number
2. Course title
3. Prerequisites/corequisites
4. Credit hours
5. Contact hours per week (number of lectures, labs, outside of class field trips, conferences)
6. Instructor's name

B. Office Information (WCFH: 2.4.2.2b)

1. Office location
2. College phone extension
3. Voice mail
4. E-mail
5. Fax
6. Office hours

C. Course Description

1. College catalog course description
2. Identify any General Education requirements that are satisfied by this course
Explain why the GE requirement is important for a Liberal Arts education. Then identify the particular course activities and goals that address the concerns of the GE requirement.
3. Instructor's course description
Catalog descriptions are generally short and sometimes generic. A professor might want to give students more specific information. Particularly in Introductory courses where different faculty in the department teach the same course, it may be valuable for each instructor to highlight his or her approach as it varies from departmental colleagues.

D. Instructional Goals and Objectives

Students often do not understand why they must take a course other than it is required in the catalog. Knowing why a course matters can foster greater engagement of the student. Clear course goals and objectives can also help advertise a course to students who might want to take it but are not sure what it is about or how it might fit into his or her overall academic program.

1. Relative to General Education
2. Relative to departmental/major goals
3. Relative to future project goals
4. Specific skills to be developed

E. Educational Philosophy and Teaching Procedures

With Sections C, D, and E, you have the opportunity to tie it all together for your students. Here is your opportunity to explain what you are doing, why you are doing it, and how it fits into the larger picture of Westmont College. Course content, pedagogical methods, departmental and institutional goals and objectives and your philosophy of education should be integrated into meaningful statements for your students.

F. Student Goals and Objectives

You might consider leaving space in the syllabus for the students to list their own course goals, which may facilitate them to make a greater personal commitment and connection to it. It may also help them recognize their responsibility for their own learning.

G. Classroom Policies

1. Attendance and tardiness policies (APP: p.6)
2. Classroom atmosphere - Knowing the kind of climate the professor expects and promotes can facilitate students to take the risk of sharing comments and ideas.

H. Texts

1. Required texts (costs) with annotation
 - a. If students are unable to afford books, will you have copies on reserve in the library?
 - b. Students often find an explanation of why you selected a text a motivation to read it.
2. Supplementary reading material (reserve or recommended reading) - Is it required?

Where can they locate these materials?

I. Grading Policies (APP: pp. 1, 14-18; WCC: pp. 35-36)

Explicit explanation of grading policies is important not only to avoid disputes but also as good pedagogical practice. Such information reinforces the kind of skills and knowledge that you expect students to demonstrate and the form by which they are to do it. It is very hard for a student to meet an expectation they do not know exists. Moreover, as a minimum standard of fairness, students should know how they will be evaluated.

Assessment of student learning should follow naturally from course goals, objectives, and your educational philosophy. There is not one right type of exam or assignment at Westmont. However, some types of exams or assignments will better assess student learning than others depending on how you have structured and described your course (Sections D & E).

1. Explanation of your evaluation instruments: class participation, quizzes, tests, papers, reports, labs, projects.

Some information to consider:

- a. If class participation is a part of the grade, how is it defined? Is it any time a student speaks or does quality matter? Does attendance and small group discussion count? Will you make accommodation for those that truly are scared out of their wits to speak publicly? What counts as excellent, adequate, or poor participation?
- b. How many quizzes, test, papers, reports, etc.? What percentage of the final grade does each represent?

2. Written-work policies

- a. Do you have a particular form or format that you expect?
- b. Will you accept an electronic version of a written assignment?

3. Deadlines

Do you accept late work? Are assignments due at the beginning or end of class or by 5:00 p.m.? What is your policy regarding computer glitches. If a student can't print a paper, can they turn in the diskette? Do you give extensions? Under what circumstances?

4. Makeup's, extra-credit

Do you or don't you? When and where? Under what circumstances?

5. Plagiarism (APP: p. 1)

- a. In addition to college policies, will you impose additional penalties?
- b. A statement or examples of what constitutes plagiarism.

J. Support Services

This area covers resources for both the student who might struggle with the course and need additional help as well as those who would like to pursue more opportunities to learn about the subject matter. For some students knowing that extra help is available may help them persevere with what they perceive as a difficult course. This information may also encourage students to access these services. For example, a professor might require that all students

who receive a grade below a “C” on their papers might be required to visit Writer’s Corner and then submit the rewrite.

1. Libraries
2. Labs
3. Tutors
4. Transfer
5. Career
6. Personal counseling

K. Course Outline

Due dates, topics, assignments

L. Extras

1. Grade recording sheet
2. Student sign-off
3. Letter to students
4. Textbook preview
5. Calendar
6. Timelines
7. Maps