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VILLANOVA INSTITUTE FOR  
TEACHING AND LEARNING

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## ***Writing an Inclusive, Learning-Centered Syllabus***

Adapted from Grunert O'Brien, J., Millis, B., & Cohen, M. (2008). (Second ed). *The course syllabus. A learning-centered approach*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass and [Creating an inclusive syllabus](#), UCLA, Center for Education Innovation & Learning in the Sciences (Accessed January 6, 2020) by Gabriele Bauer, Director, VITAL, 106 Vasey Hall, Villanova University.

*The more explicit and transparent information we can provide our students about the course goals, their responsibilities, and the criteria we will use to assess their performance, the more likely it is that they will be successful as students and we will be successful as instructors. The syllabus serves as a central means to communicate such information.*

*Modified from Grunert O'Brian, Millis, & Cohen, 2008, The course syllabus.*

This syllabus outline has been designed to assist you in developing an inclusive, learning-centered syllabus. As you work with this outline, consider the core elements (some required) and questions it presents. Feel free to modify so that your course syllabus most appropriately reflects the program, the course, and your approach to learning, teaching, and assessment. The outline highlights aspects of teaching that support an inclusive learning environment. Please use **student-centered language** when writing your syllabus; that is, the syllabus is written in first-person, and incorporates a text and tone that convey a welcoming, supportive, and encouraging climate for all students. The syllabus helps students understand the value of the course, how the course has been designed to contribute to their education as a whole person.

### **1. Course Logistics**

This section provides information about 1) instructor(s), 2) course, and 3) instructor personal information.

#### **1.1. Instructor Contact Information**

Enter instructor, and/or co-instructor name and contact information, including office phone#, email address, office address, office hours, virtual office hours via [web conferencing software](#), such as Blackboard Collaborate Ultra and Zoom. Indicate whether instructor is available by appointment and the manner in which appointments may be made. Note reasonable expectations for students regarding response time to e-mail or other messages. If multi-section course, list the name and contact information of the course coordinator that students may direct their questions to.

#### **1.2. Course Information**

Course title, number, section, semester offered, days, times of course meetings and location.  
List any dates, times of special sessions, field trips, other activities that are scheduled in place of/in addition to regularly scheduled class meetings. Note any prerequisites for student enrollment, special skills or knowledge for effectively meeting course requirements.  
Provide an accessibility statement that invites students to contact you, such as:

*Universal Learning: I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions be as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen and observe others carefully are crucial to universal learning.*

*Any student with physical ability issues should contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) at the start of the semester to coordinate appropriate accommodations. Then you and I will work together to ensure your academic success in this course as well as appropriate accommodations needed for this course.*

### 1.3. Instructor Personal Information

You may share your interest in the subject, your teaching philosophy. You may introduce co-instructors, outline their expertise and share how they will contribute.

## 2. Academic Program and Course Student Learning Outcomes

### 2.1. Course Description

Indicate how the course fits within the program, its value added for the students, its content. You may indicate the course format, e.g., seminar course, interdisciplinary, team-taught course.

### 2.2. Program Student Learning Outcomes

Indicate how the course learning outcomes align with the academic program outcomes: what academic program goals are addressed in the course? You may outline this alignment by listing each program goal relevant to a particular course goal.

*For example, in this course students articulate their data collection process by writing lab reports [course learning goal] - this goal contributes to students' ability to present written and oral reports of technical information clearly and concisely [academic program goal].*

### 2.3. Course Student Learning Outcomes

State the course learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, and competencies to be achieved. Inform the students how the course contributes to their learning. Use concrete verbs (e.g., identify, compare, appraise, estimate, predict) to articulate student learning outcomes and make them observable and measurable. The learning outcomes guide the design of assessments and in- and out-of-class activities.

Sample learning outcomes:

- *Create interactive 3-D models of products using VRML.*
- *Use energy principles to determine the stress states of structures comprised of one-dimensional elements (beams, columns, and rods).*
- *Solve geometric problems concerning planes using vectors.*

## 3. Assignments / Exams

Describe all academic requirements in the course, such as types of assignments, tests, exams, papers, projects, homework, quizzes, exhibits, presentations that students will complete and indicate how they will help students achieve the intended learning outcomes. Indicate how each assignment contributes to the final course grade. List the dates when these requirements occur or assignments are due.

Provide **opportunities for practice** and give students **frequent feedback** on their learning using low-stakes assessments (e.g., homework, reading quizzes, reflections). Require multiple high-stakes assessments (e.g., papers, performances, projects) with **opportunities to revise and resubmit** where students may demonstrate their mastery of learning outcomes. Link assignments to learning goals, explain to students what they will gain from completing assignments (besides the grade).

## 4. Grading / Course Policy

### 4.1. Grading Policy

State instructor grading policy, including the weight attached to all assignments/exams listed in the syllabus, including team work and class participation, as appropriate. Note how final grade is calculated and outline grade distribution. Set forth when/how students will receive feedback on their work and reasonable expectations about returning graded work. Set forth instructor policy regarding attendance, missed assignments, late work, extra credit, participation in online discussions. Outline instructor policy regarding participation in webinars, field trips or other activities that are scheduled in addition to and/or in place of regularly scheduled class meetings.

### 4.2. Course Policies

Outline policy pertaining to **academic integrity**, **student safety** (lab) and **civility** (e.g., use of cell phones, laptops). For example, *Eating and drinking are not permitted in the lab. Please do not bring any food or beverages into the lab. We will be working with hazardous materials throughout the semester. Eating or drinking during lab puts you and your classmates at increased risk of accident and injury from breakage or toxins. You will be asked to remove any food or beverage you bring into the lab. Please turn off your cell phones so that you can focus on the lab work at hand.*

Provide a **statement about academic integrity**, such as *When students come to Villanova, they join an academic community founded on the search for knowledge in an atmosphere of cooperation and trust. Students must be honest and forthright in their academic studies. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance. Please familiarize yourself with the [Code of Academic Integrity](https://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/provost/resources/student/policies/integrity.html):*  
<<https://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/provost/resources/student/policies/integrity.html>>

*Students are encouraged to visit the [Academic Integrity Gateway](https://library.villanova.edu/research/topic-guides/academicintegrity), complete the interactive quiz, and refer to this site as a resource:*

<https://library.villanova.edu/research/topic-guides/academicintegrity>

Include a **statement about absences on religious holidays**, such as *Villanova University makes every reasonable effort to allow members of the community to observe their religious holidays, consistent with the University's obligations, responsibilities, and policies. Students who expect to miss a class or assignment due to the observance of a religious holiday should discuss the matter with their professors as soon as possible, normally at least two weeks in advance. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the absence. Please refer to*

<https://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/provost/resources/student/policies/religiousholidays.html>

## 5. Teaching Methods and Materials

Describe the nature of instructional activities that will occur to help students accomplish set learning outcomes, such as teamwork, debates, interactive lecture, online discussions, use of Blackboard, clickers. Outline the nature of interactions and students' responsibility in their learning: student-led discussions, presentations, peer feedback, self-assessment. Note whether you will collect student feedback for instructional enhancement purposes.

List all required readings, learning materials, instructional supplies, equipment that students are expected to use in the course and indicate where they may be obtained. Please familiarize yourself with the [Villanova Copyright Policy](#).

Course material costs may pose a financial hurdle for some students. Please make an effort to adopt **affordable course materials**. Include a **statement about affordable materials** in your syllabus, such as *Villanova University is committed to providing affordable options for students to obtain textbooks and course materials. Here are some tips on how to save money:*

1. **Search Falvey Library Collection and course reserves** to see if your books are available.  
<https://library.villanova.edu/Find/>
2. **Borrow from other libraries via E-ZBorrow**  
<https://library.villanova.edu/Find/EZBorrow/Login>
3. **Find deals at the bookstore including rental and price matching programs**  
[www.villanovabookstore.com](http://www.villanovabookstore.com)

For more tips and information on how to access the options above, please visit Villanova's Affordable Materials Program (AMP) website (<https://library.villanova.edu/amp/students.html>) or search for "AMP," VU homepage.

Note. According to the Higher Education Act (HEA), indicate the following information for required/recommended textbooks, course packs and material such as software, website access, cases or simulations: the ISBN, the retail price. If the ISBN is not available, please provide the author/creator, the title, the publisher, and the copyright date: <<http://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/president/higheredact.html>>

## 6. Learning and Personal Resources

Describe how students can succeed in the course and offer study tips, resources, study guides, such as: *Guide to the readings - Keep an open mind. Listen to what the readings have to say. Think about what experiences you may have had and reading you have done that may corroborate the course readings. Give yourself time to reflect on the information offered in the readings. Take your time with the readings; allow yourself to enter into a kind of conversation with them.*

Outline how the faculty member and/or peer instructor will work with students; e.g., facilitate study groups, conduct review sessions prior to exams. Include tips from former students who have been successful in the course. You may also include links to Villanova Student Service offices that pertain directly to your course, such as [Learning Support Services](#), [Mathematics Learning Resource Center](#), and [Writing Center](#).

You may also include information on how students can access resources that support their personal and physical well-being, such as the [Student Health Center](#), the [Counseling Center](#), and the [Office of Health Promotion](#). Sample statement, *College can be quite stressful and challenging. Counseling Centers are there to support all students and they are a great resource. The Counseling Center sees more than 1400 students a year and the counselors can help you be more effective; the consultations are confidential.*

## 7. Course Calendar

List the sequencing of content areas, respective readings, schedule of course activities chronologically by class period for the entire semester. State dates, times when all academic requirements in the course need to be completed and submitted. Indicate dates for formative and summative student feedback, note drop-add dates, official holidays, breaks, and dates you will be away from campus. Refer to the [academic calendar](#) for dates. From the course calendar students should have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for each week.

## 8. Disclaimer

You may wish to include a disclaimer about possible changes to the course calendar. For example, *This syllabus is intended to outline how the course will be conducted, how you will be engaged in learning the subject matter, and how your learning will be assessed and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the professor reserves the right to modify, supplement aspects of the course as needs arise. You will be informed about these modifications in a timely fashion.*