

Resource Guide

Creating a Graphic Syllabus

The course syllabus is an important document that strives to achieve many things. While most syllabi often address the practical matters for a course such as course policies and procedures, for many educators, a syllabus is an opportunity to convey the structure of a course in a way that effectively communicates course goals, objectives and assessments (O'Brian, Mills, Cohen, 2009).

Some of the impact of describing course information can be lost within the text of the course syllabus. Incorporating graphics into a syllabus can be a useful way help convey the structure of a course but also better illustrate what is expected from students (Nilson, 2009).

A well-designed graphic syllabus can bring many other advantages. It can help clarify complex information, help students retain course information, and help instructors identify any snags in their course organization (Moosavian, 2017).

Examples of a graphic syllabus can be found in a past Notebook blog [post](#). However, listed below are a few suggestions you may want to consider while planning to create a graphic syllabus. If you would like to consult with someone about how to make a graphic syllabus for your course, contact the Reinert Center for a teaching consultation.

- **Match the kind of graphic with the type of information:** There are many different kinds of graphics you can incorporate into your syllabus, such as diagrams, flowcharts, concept maps or even visual metaphors that can serve as useful graphics to help display the sequencing and organization of course information.
- **Keep it simple:** One goal of a graphic syllabus is to succinctly provide a “big picture” perspective for your course. Having a clear sense of course goals, objectives, and assessments will help you know how to best present that information in your course syllabus and in any graphic. Knowing what not to include in your graphic syllabus can also help clarify information. Consider putting the contractual information online; however, take extra steps and show students where they can find this information online.
- **Utilize simple tools to make your syllabus visually engaging:** Incorporating graphics into a syllabus does not require high levels of design skill but should strive to be visually engaging. There are a number of different tools available to help make your graphic syllabus visually engaging including Google Charts, Piktochart, Easel.ly, or even Microsoft PowerPoint.

- **Consider including an Interactive Graphic Syllabus:** Another version of a graphic syllabus is an online version of your course syllabus that is both visually engaging and interactive. Using Google Sites, or some other web editor can help provide students a syllabus rich with supplemental material, and one that is well organized and visually engaging.

Resources

Moosavian, S. A. Z. N. (2017). Using the Interactive Graphic Syllabus in the Teaching of Economics. *American Journal of Business Education*, 10(2), 45-64.

Nilson, L. B. (2009). *The graphic syllabus and the outcomes map: Communicating your course* (Vol. 137). John Wiley & Sons.

O'Brien, J. G., Millis, B. J., & Cohen, M. W. (2009). *The course syllabus: A learning-centered approach* (Vol. 135). John Wiley & Sons.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at cttl@slu.edu.