

SYLLABUS
WORK
WEEK

Composing a Student- Friendly Syllabus

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Friday, Jan 6th, 2023 | 10-11am



Honoring and
Acknowledging

Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum





Making The Hidden Visible

Hidden curriculum in learning environments asserts that there is an assumption that students will come in having an awareness or mastery of specific:

- Learning Environment and Expectations
- Skill sets
- Knowledge
- Social Processes



Guiding Question: What are the expectations, skillsets, knowledge, and social processes that I assume students will bring to the learning environment?

(Cornbleth, 1984)

What instructors say...



Please read chapters 2 and 7.

What instructors mean:



Students will learn the material in chapters 2 and 7 so that they are able to apply the information to an assessment.

What most students hear...



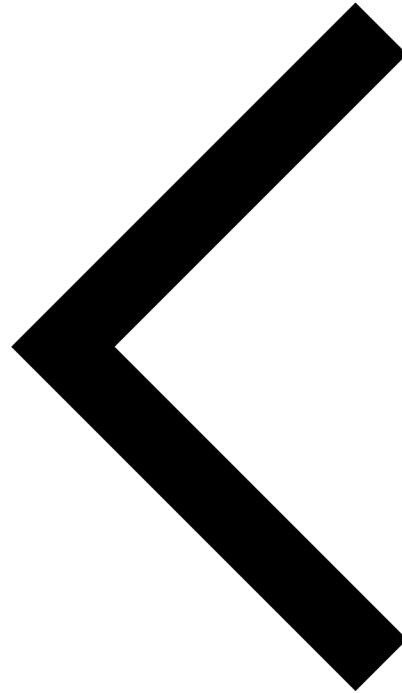
Read the information in chapters 2 and 7.

What students interpret:



I need to memorize the information in chapters 2 and 7 so that I can get a good grade on my next assessment.

intent



IMPACT



Tools For Making the Hidden Visible

Awareness

Observation

Interrogation

Transparency
of Practice

Equity of
Treatment



Transparency of Practice

Transparency- The condition of being easy to perceive or detect.

- Make clear all processes that are utilized in the syllabus
- Highlight everyone's roles and responsibilities (i.e. TAs)
- Provide purpose, nature, and process of every assessment.



Guiding Question: What is clear to me that may not be readily understood by students in my learning community?

From Theory to Practice (Examples)

- Examples from Dr. Orchard, Plant Sciences

Notes about the role of teaching assistants in course

The TAs will assist Dr. Orchard by grading all the Discussions and Module Writing Assignments, applying late penalties to Quizzes, and grading and providing feedback on the Literature Review papers for most of the students in the class (Dr. Orchard will also do some of them for Part I and Part II).

For questions about the course material, post your questions in the [Questions about the course](#) Discussion forum, or contact Dr. Orchard (orchard@arizona.edu).

Please contact Dr. Orchard (orchard@arizona.edu) for any questions about course logistics (due dates, absences, extensions, grade concerns, etc.).

Dr. Orchard's open-office hours Mondays 2:15-3:30 pm

 Link

"Open-office hours" are times I set aside to meet with students in my courses without students needing to schedule an appointment with me. If the scheduled day/time does not work for you, please contact me at orchard@arizona.edu to schedule a private meeting with me on a day/time that is better for you.



Equity in Learning Process and Practice

- We make no assumptions about where a student “should” be entering college.
- Think through language registers and levels.
- Human development is always a factor in education.
- Teaching social processes as well as content.
- Define, clarify, reinforce, repeat!



Guiding Question: Are my syllabus, policies, and practice based in equal treatment or equitable treatment of all students?

From Theory to Practice (Example)

Example from Dr. Orchard

Addressing assumption that students know what "literature" means for a literature review assignment

What is "literature"?

For the purposes of this assignment, literature is any printed or recorded material that has information on your chosen topic. You should use reputable sources of information but I generally discourage the use of technical papers written by scientists for scientists, because they are likely too technical/challenging for most students in this course. However, if you feel like you can understand those papers, you are free to use them. For more information, see the [Assignment](#) instructions for links to websites with more information on this style of paper and on choosing appropriate sources.

Providing resources with students, as well as an explanation for *why* these resources are important

Fight off Imposter Syndrome

Do you feel as though you're not really meant to be here? That you're not as smart as other students? Then you, like many people, might have Imposter Syndrome. Know this: if you are registered for this course, then you are meant to be here and you can succeed. Here are some tips to fight off feeling like an imposter:

- [10 steps you can use to overcome imposter syndrome](#)
- [How to overcome imposter syndrome](#) (includes TED talk link)



Consider...

Culture Shifting

What might be shifted in your learning environment culture by engaging the syllabus this way?

Language Matters

How might the language that you use create barriers, privilege experiences, or center the student?

Student Autonomy and Engagement

How does the syllabus invite students to navigate, question, think through, etc. the syllabus?

An Invitation for Learning

In what ways does this invite students into the learning process?

Welcoming Student Inquiry

How might this process welcome student inquiry for the duration of the course?




Making Policies for Learning

... not for anxious minds



What is a policy and why have one?

- Policy: a course or principle of action adopted by an individual or group
 - "a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions" (Merriam Webster)
 - Rationale includes setting of expectations and accountability, and developing a strong culture
- 



Audience(s)



Content



Goals



Tone

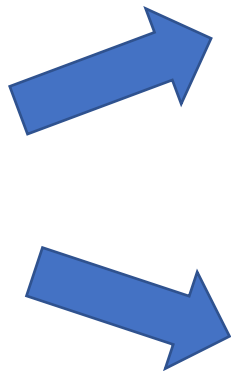
Considering Policies

If policies should help students in anticipated and unexpected circumstances, shouldn't their tone reflect caring while being clear on the expectations?



Goals/Intent vs. Communication/Impact

- Provide a help manual
- Streamline problem-solving
- Ensure equity in handling cases



Common emphasis:

- Rules and demands
 - Authoritative and top-down
 - Threats of consequences for non-compliance
-

Caring emphasis:

- Solutions and resources
- Inviting, maybe collaborative (“constitution”)
- Offering rationales and alternatives

Handling Institutional Policies



Link to mandatory policies
([Syllabus Project, Academic Affairs](#))



Comment on policies as a whole or highlight specific ones in your own words



Use recommended language and/or use your own – what are you signaling?

Example for Link:

"Please carefully review the course relevant policies of the UA here:

<https://academicaffairs.arizona.edu/syllabus-policies>.

The entirety of UA Policies can be found here:

<https://catalog.arizona.edu/policies>."

Leveraging Course Policies



Context



Progress and
Completion



Culture and
Community

From Theory to Practice (Example)

“Elective Name and Pronoun Usage”

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you are comfortable doing so, please provide your elected names and pronouns to your classmates in Discussion 1: Introduce Yourself. If you are not comfortable doing that, please email me this information and I will endeavor to address you using your chosen name and pronouns. You may call me Dr. Orchard and use she/her or they/them pronouns for me. **Please correct me if I do not use your [] gender pronouns and names.** Please see Student Resources for more information on how to change your [] name and/or pronouns in the UAccess system.

- Dr. Samantha Orchard, Plant Sciences



From Theory to Practice

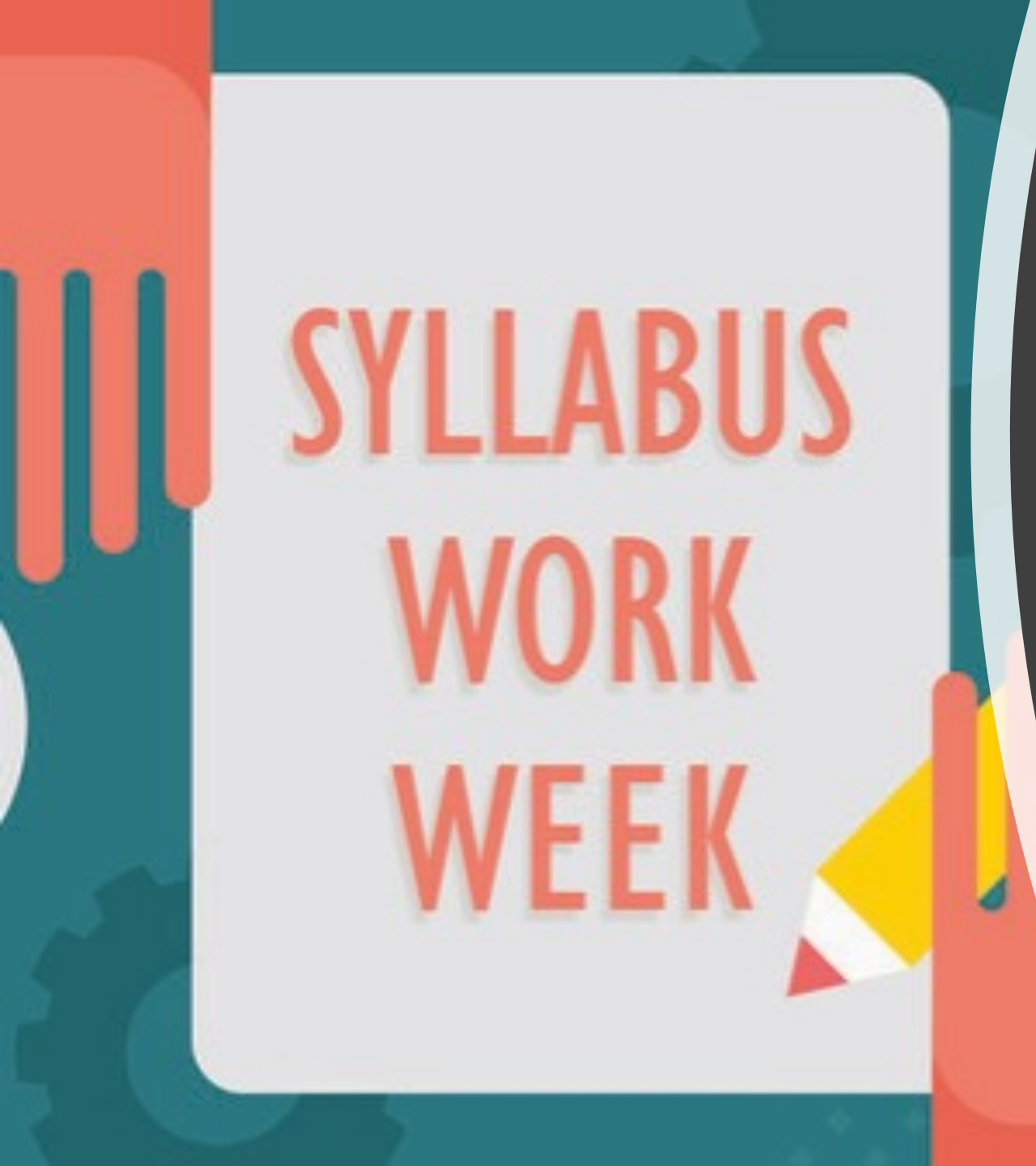


What are three concrete ways that you can implement what you have heard today in your syllabus/class?

1.

2.

3.



SYLLABUS WORK WEEK

Thank you!

Find more resources at:

<https://ge.arizona.edu/support/syllabus-work-week>

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